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# PEOPLE AND THINGS

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PEOPLE  
AND THINGS

*An Attempt to connect  
Art and Humanity*

By  
H. J. MASSINGHAM

*"It all comes back to  
people and things"*

—Charles Marriott

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To  
CHARLES MARRIOTT  
and  
FRANCIS MEYNELL

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P R E F A C E

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THIS book was written in the spring and early summer of last year, at one of the darkest periods of recorded history. Since then, history has turned vorticist and three events of a supreme importance have taken place. Men's slaughter of their fellows has ceased; the German people has overthrown its Moloch and here, in our own dear land, has come the final exposure of the conspirators who aim at *our* life and the beginning of the possibly final reaction of the English people against them. The practical question for me is—do these prodigious phenomena outpace the argument contained in the first three chapters? Authors have their vanities, whatever they may protest to the contrary, but I think I can say without humbug that I should not be the last to welcome the day when the interest of that argument had become retrospective and academic. That day has not yet arrived, nor may it for years, nor, even when it comes, may it be a happy one. But it is no longer a castle in the air; that distant purple shape which so many of us have taken for a cloud, is, after all, a mountain. What has come to us in the last month, or is immediately coming, is not change, but at last, the lively hope of change. Therefore, almost insensibly, our perspective is shifting. Before, we only knew the imperative need of change; now, we begin to ask ourselves of the temper, quality and destination of the change in actual prospect. What is our choice of it, what is its most desirable form, in what way will our present attitude towards it affect its direction and secure its fortunes, to what port or desolate open sea will it lead us and how can it be made most worthy both of the noble volunteers who have fought and died for it in the war, and of those who have been perse-

cuted for it at home, of the martyrs for it yesterday, and of Blake, Shelley, Morris, and their fellows who lived for it in a remoter past? Therefore, because I have made an attempt, however insignificant, both to answer those questions and to contemplate what they are an answer to, I have made no alteration in the manuscript, and will ask the reader himself to substitute a "was" for an "is," on the very few occasions when some fact, apart from its relation to ideas, has mercifully slipped into the past.

H. J. M.

*January, 1919.*

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**H**YPOCRISY and custom make their minds  
The fanes of many a worship, now outworn.  
They dare not devise good for man's estate,  
And yet they know not that they do not dare.  
The good want power, but to weep barren tears,  
The powerful goodness want: worse need for them,  
The wise want love; and those who love want wisdom;  
And all best things are thus confused to ill. *Shelley*

**B**EHOLD thyself by inward optics and the crystalline of thy soul. *Sir Thomas Browne*

## INTRODUCTORY

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If books could be left to speak for themselves, rather than the author for himself, there would be fewer "Forewords." All I have to say here is by way of caution, not summary or exposition. The argument must be left to stand on its own legs or fall without prefatorial excuse or support from me. But I ought perhaps to try and clear away one or two possible misunderstandings. To begin with, there are a few verbal ones.

Commerce, for instance, is obviously not the same thing as Commercialism. But, as I am discussing the modern transformation of commerce, all my references to it should be taken in that sense. Other references to the "Commercial State" may be more ambiguous, since modern states are not really states at all, but the implicit representation of commercial oligarchy. Again, is it necessary to point out that other references I have made to the liberty of the individual do not mean the liberty to housebreak? In W. H. Hudson's "Birds and Man" there is a chapter upon the imminent extinction, by a rabble of collectors and their parasites, of the little furze-wren. A law to prohibit private collections, the author writes, is the only remedy. The Committee appointed by the Government to consider bird protection would not, he thinks, recommend that law, because it "would be aimed at those of

their own class, at their friends, at themselves." Interviewing a great landowner, Mr. Hudson gives us his reply—"I am a collector myself, and I am perfectly sure that such an interference with the liberty of the subject would not be tolerated." I am not writing this book to advocate that kind of "liberty of the subject." My aim is not so lofty. If again I have not made it clear that society and the individual are in indispensable relation to each other, I have got nowhere. In the same way, my remarks about Socialism, the Press, etc., apply to certain attitudes and states of mind; they do not condemn out of hand. Of course not. The states of mind will absolve or condemn. I have throughout tried to deal with ideas rather than facts.

I have again set forth a few notions here about the relation of government to human beings and the pleasant things of a life which my reader will understand and interpret in the spirit rather than to the letter. If modern civilisation is found wanting, a change will have to come—a change that will be impotent and destructive unless it be one of thought, attitude and values.

Then again, judging man by his actions to-day (I am writing in the spring and summer of 1918) it might seem a little quaint to advocate a trust in the humanities (singular and plural) as the moral of the book. Here again, I beg the reader not to bottle me up too literally. I merely wish to say, after E. M. Forster in "Howard's End," "The confidence trick

is the work of man, but the want of confidence trick is the work of the devil." But that does not commit sensible people to immediate and fantastic expectations of human nature.

In the next place, my few references to the war are not intended to take part in the pros and cons of immediate controversy. I am looking at the war as a European phenomenon, whose ancestry and heritage are not actually affected by the question of who began it and how it will end. Everybody knows who fired the rick; the Germans themselves know it, or would know it if they were allowed. It would, indeed, be an easy matter to select Germany from the family of European nations and let her bear the weight of the sins of Europe. No chastisement that other hands can inflict upon her can measure that with which she will scourge herself, in victory or defeat. The spirit has its own way of taking revenge for the outrages committed upon it. The outrage itself is the revenge, for the spirit departs. But the unspeakably vile corruption of the Prussian spirit is not the sins of Europe; it is a caricature of them—a matter of some difficulty, triumphantly achieved.



**N**NATIONS are not built up by the repetition of words,  
but by the organising of intellectual forces. *A. E.*

**B**UT he's got nothing on.

*Hans Andersen*

**P**IGMIES are pygmies still tho' perched on Alps  
And pyramids are pyramids in vales. *Hudibras*

**H**E knows what's what and that's as high  
As metaphysic wit can fly.

*Hudibras*

**T**HE fellow's tongue is at his fingers' ends.  
*Cook's "Green's Tu Quoque"*

**T**HE Creator, who out of clay first tempered and made  
us up, put into the composition of our humanity more  
than a pound of passions to an ounce of reason; and reason  
he confined to the narrow cells of the brain, whereas he left  
passions the whole body to range in. *Erasmus*

**N**O law of that country must exceed in words the number  
of letters in their alphabet, which consists only in  
two-and-twenty. *Swift*

**I**T is not the clear-sighted who teach the world. Great  
achievements are accomplished in a blessed, warm,  
mental fog. *Joseph Conrad*

**T**O repeat is to prove.

*Anatole France*

**G**IVE me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue  
freely according to conscience, above all other  
liberties. *John Milton*

THE tyrant on the throne  
Is the morning and evening press,  
In all the land his spies,  
A little folk but strong,  
A second plague of flies,  
Buzz of the right and the wrong;  
Swarm in our ears and our eyes—  
News and scandal and lies.  
Men stand upon the brink  
Of a precipice every day;  
A drop of printer's ink  
Their poise may overweigh;  
So they think what the papers think,  
And do as the papers say.  
Who reads the daily press,  
His soul's lost here and now;  
Who writes for it is less  
Than the beast who tugs a plough.

*John Davidson*

BUSINESS men boast of their skill and cunning,  
But in philosophy they are like little children.  
Bragging to each other of successful depredations,  
They neglect to consider the ultimate fate of the body  
What should they know of the Master of Dark Truth  
Who saw the wide world in a jade cup,  
By illumined conception got clear of Heaven and Earth:  
On the chariot of Mutation entered the Gate of Immu-  
bility?

*Ch-en Tzü-ang (seventh century)*

## THE WORD AND THE MOB

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**N**APOLEON, one of those children who, like Genghis Khan, Tamerlane, Alexander, Pyrrhus and their kind, never grew up (a little child shall lead them to the slaughter-house, as one might say), used to call us, as all the world knows, a nation of shopkeepers. It was a good one for Napoleon, whose wisdom (apart from his capacity for mischief) never rose above the level of the untrained school-boy with his honour rooted in destroying all the birds' nests he can find. The grand historians who live at Oxford and Cambridge, again, call us by the flattering name of a "democracy," as if "democracy" were not only an end in itself, but an achieved end.\* Nobody can possibly know what a democracy is or means (we are, for instance, at present ruled by what might be called a commercial-autocratic-demagogic) because classes, parties and persons, divided by incompatible aims

\* This is a point, which, simple as it is, sadly needs clarifying. All parties in the country, Liberal, Tory, Radical and Labour, are bondholders to the idea that a thing cannot be right and true unless a certain number of people believe and say that they believe it to be so. Here is a sample. Lord Lansdowne (a survival of a type of excellent Tory long, long ago at rest) writes a letter advocating a certain policy. The *Times* dismisses his argument. On what grounds? By the *riposte* that Lord Lansdowne only represents himself. How does the other side retaliate upon that? By arguing that what Lord Lansdowne says is right and true, though he only represents the Man in the Moon?—by the statement that as a matter of fact he represents the opinions of quite a number of

and interests, are all united in a passion for and a pride in democracy. Without knowing what it means any more than they do, I cannot feel that if democracy is an achieved end, it is a desirable one. Possibly, too, the enthusiasm of the shopkeepers for democracy may suggest to a cautious intelligence the idea that democracy and shopkeeping are no more at odds with each other than are average Liberals and Tories. It all comes back to language. Nobody knows what designations in topical use really mean, and so everybody specialises in them for all they are worth. Democracy itself has come to be a mere word, a shrivelled phrase as meaningless as the appendix, and no less dangerous. How many millions of human beings have been done to death for a question begged, a verbal cart put before the horse or an "undistributed middle"? Similarly both in peace and war pretended foes can make real hatreds among natural friends, and unnatural foes promote the mutual aims of secret allies.

The object of the business man (of whom the shopkeeper is the chrysalis) is to make power and

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people. The point is trivial enough, but it illustrates how farcically irrelevant the modern "democratic" attitude to representation really is. In an age less barren than ours and irrigated by the milk of human kindness, sense and tolerance, majority rule would no longer be the insoluble problem it now is. But when *suppressio veri, suggestio falsi*, are rammed down on people's heads or, rather, clapped on poor Truth down at the bottom of her well, not one person in a hundred knows his own mind, and if he do, the fewer adherents he has the more likely for the truth to be in him. The Holy Ghost no longer descends of its own will upon us in the likeness of a dove. It is bawled out of heaven and comes tumbling down dead with the shock.

money for himself—money to make power and power to make money. Living in a period favourable above all others to his view of life, he will, if he is a successful money-maker, possess power, and if he possess power he will use it, or rather abuse it, since he has achieved it by the exercise of qualities other than spiritual and intellectual. We need not attach horns and hooves to his extremities. The poor thing is the automatic product of a system, a system of grab and cheat. Being the machine of a machine, the object of his mechanical existence is to put and keep the machinery of his dominion in motion. He is confronted, therefore, by a double problem. He has not merely to dominate the matter which provides him his wealth, but the mind which provides him his power. An industrial system, that is to say, is impossible without a mental system to match it and to prevent industrialism from appearing the grotesque anomaly it really is. He has to establish, he has established, an empire over the “things of the mind,” for even he has to recognise that the things of the flesh cannot be made for him without them. That the public may supply him with what he wants, he (as he ingenuously puts it to himself) supplies the public with what it wants.

He does nothing of the kind. He imposes upon the public a supply of what he wants them to buy, to read and to think. Thanks to the instinctive deceptiveness of the whole system, both he and the public

are probably under the delusion that he is supplying and they are receiving exactly what they want. Nevertheless, it is a fatal error to assume that business and popular tastes are identical. In the matter of all commodities nowadays, including the arts, thought and the emotions, the old Smilesian political economy has, like Max Beerbohm's caricature of Bernard Shaw, to be made to stand on its head. The supply creates the demand, not the demand the supply. Sweet are the uses of advertisement. A demand for an article is worked up by a copious and ineluctable supply thereof. That the public taste is vitiated in the process is obvious; indeed, an identity of tastes *is* the result—between that of the business man and the Lowest Common Multiple of the public consciousness. But it will not do to confuse this artificial demand with an actual want—to confuse people themselves with the things they are forced to think, have and believe. That actual want is  $\alpha$ , a quantity unknown, because it never gets the chance to reveal itself.

Possibly yet another identity emerges here: that of the shopkeeper (in the more modern sense of finance, which moves further and further away from the shop) with his democracy. For the business of business—developing not according to a set plan, but as a natural sequence—is to turn the single mind into a mass-mind, the people into a mob, into a machine for registering the interested promptings and impressions thrust upon it. The gerontocracy

engenders and dandles its child, the apple of its eye—the mobocracy. Physics say that a compound body differs as an entity from the atoms that compose it. Let us pray that this mass-mind, this mob, is not representative (of course it is not) of the individual Englishmen who are supposed to congeal into it. For the way to realise it is to study the Scarlet Press, our Lady of Babylon, which represents it, because it creates it. Indeed, one has a fellow-feeling with Shakespeare in approaching this mob. There were mobs in his days, and large portions of the chronicle plays are a compromise between popular fashion and personal inclination, between Shakespeare's artistic conscience and the audience at the Globe. His emphatic hatred and contempt of the mob were derived in part from a realisation of the crude indulgences which that mob had compelled from him. He too felt the commercial pinch. A rare editor the Antony of "Julius Cæsar" would have made for Carmelite House! But to discuss this Press is too painful a subject for men who love their country. When Pepys had been to the theatre and had heard wind-music, he related how the enchantment of it upon him made him feel sick, as sick as he felt "when I was in love with my wife." Extremes meet and this Press makes us feel sick.

Yet neither this Press nor any gutter Government it may create lays plans founded upon principles. It has not the head for them. Its strength re-

sides in the ignorance and prejudice of the mob which its own ignorance and interested prejudice have fashioned—of a mob accustomed to learn by being told things over and over again (“with the public to repeat is to prove”) instead of thinking them out. It tells the mob things congenial to its lower mental powers. Everything is presented except intelligence, the purpose (whether conscious or not) being to prevent people from thinking by providing them, day in and evening out, with the peppered pap of exclamation, invective, sensation, rhetorical appeal, fabrication, hyperbole, raw generalisation, dressed in every kind of stylistic harlotry that can excite the physical passions. All this gawdy sensuality of language, if it does not actually suppress the power of the mind’s resistance, leaves uncommonly little to be suppressed. As for poor Truth, she remains at the bottom of her well, and in wars, as everybody knows, the wells are always poisoned.

Nor is atrophy of thought the only result. The lower mental faculties cultivated by the Press will not only paralyse thought, but hate it; not only hate it, but denounce it, since denunciation is so much easier than comprehension. It is so much easier to say that a man is a Bolshevik than to explain what he really thinks and is, how he came to think and to be so, wherein he is right or wrong, trustworthy or untrustworthy, or even what you mean by a Bolshevik. So much easier to read that sort of

thing in the train, so much easier and more exciting to repeat it. The credulity and suspicion thus generated are, perhaps, the worst by-products of the war. Private incentives to revenge and blackmail are encouraged by them; rank growths of hysterical hatreds and fears spread upon their swampy soil; every man's distrust is turned against his neighbour, and every generous impulse, every frank emotion, all warmth and confidence in human relations are dry-rotted. A fungus-growth of superstition overspreads the tree of life. It were well for the witch-doctors of such passions to take heed to themselves; for authority itself to beware lest, having brewed such venom it, too, as well as all things fair, be poisoned by it. The reaction against authority, conspicuous in the shameful Billing case, is a warning to all who have eyes to see and noses to hold. Yet the purpose behind this Press cannot be called a fiendish one. Not at all. The business spirit is at work upon creating a demand for a cheap and shoddy article. The legitimate deduction to make (to come back to our identities) is the infallible correspondency, the unerring likeness between the business instinct, and what is worst in life and thought.

This cozenage and quackery of thought result in something which is its reverse. What a poetic justice for the sleights of jiggery-pokery that they should merge into a flat, arid standardisation of thought and idiom. The red herring has not a flap

in its dusty carcase. In topics of "national importance," that is to say, nobody knows what anyone else means, but everybody expects it to be said. "The Man in the Street" (*viz.*, the personified embodiment of the mob) is a simple quantity; his hearer knows exactly what he is going to say because he is never allowed to think. He responds only to the few organised and fallacious *clichés*, half-truths and catchwords which are diurnally pumped into him. He becomes actually a kind of incarnated headline; so that he does not talk, he rustles like the leaves of a newspaper. Poor paper-machine, with his endless twaddle about the affairs of the world, how shall we see either in him or his words a concrete, living being, telling its own story and evoking its own reactions, how discover in him the sweetness, novelty and ardour of the human reality? Poor beggared phrase-maker, strutting in his paper doss-house as though it were a palace! Surely one of the reasons why the frank materialism of Falstaff is so delightful is because it digs holes into the drab pattern of preconceived ideas in which we are all now enmeshed.

For this duplicity of cant leads inevitably into the monotony of the average. In a way it is a comfort that it does, for if we perceive excellence and a kind of integrity in the harmony of the universe, so likewise should we read there distinction, freshness and an infinite diversity. But in the falsification of the Press and its mass-mind, the neutrality of

custom covers as by a dank mist the bacchanial revels. There cannot be anything more tedious than a routine of artificially stimulated excitement.

Uniform dullness, then, is the consequence of the written inebriety which is given out by a mob-ridden Press and taken in by a Press-ridden mob. They themselves again are the products of the business principle, as our educational methods of teaching mental discipline by dull routine are a preparative to the dull mechanism of business. The vicious wheel comes its full circle. Dullness and business must always go together. It is not interesting to read in our papers and solve in our lives problems of how to get money, when and where to spend it, how to gain more than our neighbour, how to avoid the consequences of having less, where to put it so that nobody else can get it, how to die with plenty and live with little. Such interests tend to make us forget that man alone of the creatures can see the flowers in the sky and the stars on the earth.

It is a reproach against our country that we make a fetish of dullness. But whatever our frailties, we are, after all, human beings, and they who call out upon us, "Go up, ye dullards!" are as dull as we are, since they, too, are taught to be dull in youth, to prepare the way for leading still duller lives in manhood. Dr. Skinner, the routine monger, in "The Way of all Flesh," is the headmaster, not only of Roughborough School, but of Dotheboys Hall. It is a sad imbroglio. Our schools teach us the routine

of dullness, our business manufactures dullness, and our Press, relieving us from dullness by delirium in order to make our dull lives tolerable and ourselves submissive to the normal dullness of our lives, is most damnably dull. If anybody should ask why this age has forgotten Christ, the answer should be because it changes the wine of life into peppermint water.

In a metallic age, thought might seem to be hard and flat, but still tangible, something that had a solid if ugly ring in it. But nowadays the corresponding thought is half-and-half stuff; its substance is of a viscid semi-liquidity; it is prosaic and sentimental at the same time, and the pulpy heart sticks to the sleeve. It is a reminder of chaos, which is neither hard nor soft, wet nor dry, hot nor cold; but which is yet cold under its apparent heat. But chaos is not. It is Nought and denies the *Cogito, ergo sum* of all created life. We ought not to be talking about thought at all, even "canalised" thought; language, a ready-made clothing for dummy ideas, has been substituted for thought and, worse still, for feeling.

This separation of words from things has a natural corollary in that of deeds from thoughts. The business man is the "man of action." He likes to regard himself as sharp, ready, prompt, clear, decisive, crisp and methodical. In his documents he aims at conciseness and brevity by omitting the prepositions and pronouns (as being the arabesques

to the plain structure of language), leaving the copulent nouns and docking the tails of his specimens of tag Latin. Cobbett in his "Advice to Young Men" warns them against "your sauntering, soft-stepping girls, from whom you may never expect ardent and lasting affection." The girl he advises is one with "a quick step and a somewhat heavy tread, showing that the foot comes down with a hearty good will and, if the body leans a little forward and the eyes keep steadily in the same direction while the feet are going, so much the better, for these discover earnestness to arrive at the intended point."

Mere words, then, accompany mere acts. There were two famous apples in the world, the apple of discord (words) and the apple of Eve (their meaning). The one was made of shavings; the other is still an honest russet. It was a pity that Adam and Eve only took two bites out of it and then threw it away, for we have only one left. "Certain it is," writes Burke, "that the influence of most things on our passions is not so much from the things themselves as from our opinions concerning them, and these again depend very much on the opinions of other men, conveyable for the most part by words alone." A word, a phrase, born out of itself by some mysterious parthenogenic process, can commit whole hosts of men to sacrifice. The menace of words is that they may be anything or nothing—angels, devils, village idiots, Chan-

cellors of the Exchequer, and the seven plagues are upon us once the word escapes from the thing or the idea. There was the Kaiser saying God was on his side. Sections of our Press hurl the word back into the fence of his teeth: "You lie, blasphemer, He is on *our* side!" The rational man may well pause before adding his voice to the fierce invocations and recriminations of polytheistic tribalism. Lord Roberts said: "War is as inevitable as death; it is salutary, necessary, and the only natural tonic that can be prescribed." Hellish words, but still only words, romantically bombinating *in vacuo*.

The bookstalls in their gay coverings minister still more to our romantic feelings. A pleasantly vague impression steals upon us as soft as that made by a man of flesh upon a very yielding arm-chair. The impression is Paradisal—a romantic sense of how comfortable, heroic, grand, powerful, tender, true-hearted, virile, simple, clean-living, radiant, happy, stern, practical, unselfish, devoted, dashing, delicious and well-off the British Empire is. It is unmannerly, we exclaim, to interrupt these hymns of self-glorification by the reflection that every silver lining has a cloud. The romance of business follows. But the pen falters.

Talking of novels, a notable example of words for things was presented me some weeks ago by a novel called "Valour." The hero, Hammersley, an ardent young individualist, disobeys his colonel's

orders at Gallipoli, is discharged from the Army, casts off his "sneering, critical selfishness," learns "a few simple and stable truths," realises that he is a Socialist—that is to say, that he believes in discipline for all; re-enlists as a private, makes a "useful mess" of the Germans and wins the Victoria Cross and a life-partner whose pride has recovered. The shocking thing is that a few misguided readers might be led to feel for Hammersley No. 1, rather than for Hammersley No. 2. "He hated authority; he hated routine. . . . vulgarity and caddishness and red-tape and the beastly cheap cynicism that you hear in the average mess"; he would have liked "to send some of the comfortable middle-aged people out there, the men who are so cheerful and well-fed, and who say, 'Oh, we have only to go on long enough and we are bound to win'"; he rebels against his colonel, Barnack, "who had Prussian ideas" and "no sympathy, no pity, no imagination," who "sent men to death with an imperturbable and grim face." He discovers "the realities behind the glamour—such things as mean fear, servility, bombs, flies on jam, corpses over the parapet, stenches, yellow soul-sick faces, men covered with sores"; he feels "the machine of war crushing people and rolling on." "All the mad murder, this sacrificing of young men by the old at home!" he exclaims; "the devilish absurdity of the whole thing" infuriate him.—"Civilisation ending in rat-holes and blood and little stinking chemical

atrocities! Mobs rushing together, losing their heads, getting drunk on phrases!" The author's readers (the sane majority of them) will not wonder that the colonel called this Hammersley fellow "over-civilised and degenerate," and that the Jekyll-Hammersley, having overthrown the Hyde-Hammersley, thoroughly agreed with him. The darkest hour precedes the dawn, the hooting of the owls gives place to the sweet jargonings of the early morning birds and Hammersley comes to his senses. Foiled egoism leaves its spiritual prey and our hero *mens sana in corpore sano* "began to realise that the war was no newspaper affair, no sensational interlude, but that it was life itself, remorseless and splendid, a stark fight for elemental things."

The reader, who turns to the voyage to Laputa, will peruse the following:—"They can discover a close stool to signify a privy-council; a flock of geese a senate; a lame doe an invader; the plague a standing army; a buzzard a prime minister; the gout a high priest; a gibbet a secretary of state; a chamber a committee of grandees; a sieve a court lady; a broom a revolution; a mouse-trap an employment; a bottomless pit a treasury; a sink a court; a cap and bells a favourite; a broken reed a court of justice; an empty tun a general; a running sore the administration."

For every crime, every superstition and falsehood can be justified and are continually justified by the irrelevant word; by the abracadabra of mock-

dignified and sanctimonious words—words that are not representations of but substitutes for things and ideas. Bacon wrote:—"It was great blasphemy when the devil said, 'I will ascend and be like the Highest,' but it is greater blasphemy to personate God and bring him in saying, 'I will descend and be like the Prince of Darkness.' " Misappropriated terms, verbal sophism and rhetoric, the specious phrase—language, that is to say, which is no longer the bright glass of truth and thought and actuality, released language, the first parent of prejudice, error and the passions of mankind—can accomplish the transformation with ease. Surely false language is as good a test of a false man as anything in the world. "Language most shows a man," said Ben Jonson, "speak that I may see thee. No glass renders a man's form or likeness as true as his speech. Nay, it is likened to a man; and as we consider feature and composition in a man, so words in language; in the greatness, aptness, sound structure and harmony of it." Out of the mouth, the heart speaketh. The word divorced from the thing or idea is man exiled from God.

So with the deed. The heartless and mindless deed is father and son of the heartless and mindless word and both of them sin against people and things. But the reality behind the illusion, the permanent through the transitory, the thought behind the word or deed, what have they to do with the machine-made system of business and politics

under which we live? The business man looks neither to the right hand nor to the left; he sees one thing and that the nearest one; without thinking upon the matter he grasps it.

All education, indeed, is worthless which does not choose, not the first and the nearest, but that which is best. For its concern should be not with speaking and doing, but with being. Mr. Overton says to his son, who had criticised the first Mr. Pontifex: "I tell you, Edward, we must judge men not so much by what they do, as by what they make us feel that they have it in them to do. If a man has done enough in painting, music, or the affairs of life to make me feel that I might trust him in an emergency, he has done enough. It is not by what a man has actually put upon his canvas, nor yet by the acts which he has set down, so to speak, upon the canvas of his life, that I will judge him, but by what he makes me feel that he felt and aimed at. If he has made me feel that he felt those things to be lovable which I hold lovable myself, I ask no more." Words and deeds, indeed, are not absolute but relative, valuable so far as they reveal, worthless so far as they obscure the secret mines of being. The real, the vivid, the practical person is he who seeks the less conscious self and dives for the pearls of reality hidden in the depths.

Let us come back to the mob-mind, to this albuminous clot (*pondus immobile, vis inertiae*). What are the results of creating it? It is natural

for the self-interested to couple ignorance with docility. If a dog crouch down before a man who is powerful, who has achieved power by activities such as are resisted by delicacy of feeling, who is made conscious of his power by the submissiveness of the dog, the dog is giving the man an invitation to strike him. "Chattery and smattery" short cuts to a cheap knowledge, money-values, sham gentility and primer scrappiness are an invitation to power to make itself felt, because they submerge the resisting power of knowledge and criticism. When on the one side a people are a herd living in ferment and distraction, while the members of it are at the same time all struggling to be exactly like one another, and on the other are faced with the immeasurable power of finance, then if that power abstains from profiting by these conditions, "miracles" as old Walton says, "are not ceased." In such a world as ours, autocracy or, to call it more comprehensively, plutocracy, is, indeed, co-extensive with mobocracy. The two are indispensable to one another. Power such as Alexander never tasted falls ripe to them who employ the influence of mobilised deceit and disguise; who make their intellectual wares attractively shoddy, "bright" and vulgar; who appeal to the lowest passions of the greatest number, flatter their superstitions, and give them a rattle to play with and make believe it is a sceptre; who throw out a sprinkling of grand and meaningless words ending in "ism" and trade

upon the infinite capacity of the modern democracy for illusion.

An instinctive conspiracy against the human mind thus grows and develops, until the opportunity of war shakes it into a full consciousness. War decomposes all virtue, all beauty, all sanity, and makes short work of national intelligence. "Deceit, cruelty and injustice are the appanage of war," writes Tertullian. Finally, war encourages a direct persecution of thought. That persecution would have come without the intervention of war, had the industrial system been permitted to unfold itself unhindered. War itself was the next, is, perhaps, the last step of an industrialised Europe, but while it affords every scope for the suppression of thought, it is not the predisposing cause of suppression. It is the pretext at the fingers' ends, so to speak, and the appalling reactions evoked by war itself make the fingers whip the knife out of the sheath more quickly and firmly.

Thus an effect itself becomes a cause and the cause again generates its effect in endless iteration; until poor Ixion, bound to his revolving wheel, becomes an emblem of humanity. Thus Thomas Hardy's noble phrase — "the pale, pathetic peoples"—comes to life in all its poignancy. An open campaign of mouth-gagging, a ponderous head-clubbing, starts into being which duplicity itself makes no attempt to hide. The winter of our discontent comes upon us, and the free, brine-

tossing, running sea of human expression is at last frozen still. "Milton, thou should'st be living at this hour." But this conspiracy against the human mind is not (to pass from extreme cold to extreme heat) a Guy Fawkes plot hatched out of the war. The fuse has been laying for a hundred years, and the observer looks upon a completed stage of evolution. The *rabies* of war speeds the process up; the wind of tendency has become a cyclone.

We may feel that authority, too, is a victim of the system which we have been living under for a hundred years and which has brought so awful a Nemesis upon the world. Authority prowls forlornly in its deserts. In other days, and among other records of the persecution of the mind—under the conditions that drew forth the Areopagitica, under the censorship of the Spanish Inquisition and the Council of Trent, or the book-slaughtering "Avec Privilège du Roi" of Louis XIV, the spirit of intellectual beauty has had its Pilates. In the full tide of Elizabethan literature, the Stationers' Company had, according to an unimpeachable authority, Mr. McKerrow, "supreme power over printing," "the right of search," and "control over all stationers, publishers, importers of books or bookbinders not belonging to the Company, as well as over its own members." Ben Jonson went to prison for a trifling infraction of one of these regulations and Middleton's "The Game of Chess" was suppressed for its covert criticism of the Spaniards. The Star Cham-

ber was forerunner of our Dora. The design of this legislation was then, as it is now, theogono-political; and the difference in kind is not in the law, but the religion. The Puritans of yesterday who were the principal sufferers by these laws are the whole of the thinking and feeling public of to-day. Yet the books (such as have escaped the "conspiracy of silence") live: a dusty obloquy covers their censors.

Art and thought, therefore, retire from the State and public life into their tubes and burrows. But the gifts of God are immortal, and intelligence cannot be killed.\* One day they will emerge like subterranean fires and no longer, perhaps, as the utterance of English, French or German provincialism, but of human life.

So then, life and thought have ebbed out of this dispossessed State and the parasitic public opinion it does possess; barbarity and stupidity usurp the empty seats. The sacrilege which the barbarians meditated against the British Museum was of a piece with the sterility of heart and the stultification of idea which, in the persons of a handful of rulers

\* Yet how much genius and beauty have not been blown to fragments by the blunderbuss of Power? How much, whisper the ghosts of the frustrated, thick as the leaves of Vallombrosa? A foolish saw runs: "genius will out," "murder will out." How can our wiseacre know? Because I can see only half a dozen stars on a moon-lit night, am I to run to my neighbour with news that there are no more than half a dozen stars to the heavens? It is like the cocksure mentality of a business age to cry "I can't see it; therefore, it does not exist." I do not know how much genius has been lost to the world, but certainly more has been lost to it than gained.

and business men, command and destroy the lives, happiness, and freedom of millions of human beings. Nationalism in a nation is really the same thing as egoism in an individual. In Germany, a bottomless vacuity, a wild infatuation of knavery and folly ("Folly is the cloak of knavery," says one of the "Proverbs of Hell") furnished an invaluable burlesque and object-lesson upon the antics of irresponsible Power, not uncommon in up-to-date European civilisation. Your shades, crucified youth of Europe, shall pass sentence.

But it is time to suggest a possible way out of the pit. On measuring the pit's diameter, estimating its depth and investigating its gases, let us, at the risk of perfunctory treatment, spend no more time than we can help. And I feel some confidence in attempting to outline the steps for climbing out, in that better minds than mine have done all the pick-axe work before me. To clear these steps, not to make them, is our job to-day.

It is, of course, easy to suggest certain remedies for the decay in the "things of the mind," and the mere consciousness of things as they mentally are is something to start with. The problem centres round men themselves, not their rulers. "Only connect" runs a wise word, and certainly a chosen people is one which can put two and two together. Know the false and the door often opens of itself to the true. If there is an L.C.M. of public commonness, there might be somewhere an H.C.F. of

public common sense. The question resolves itself into separating the public of vested interests from the true public, into separating the wheat of democracy from the tares; or rather into cultivating the one and crowding out the other.

I make no mention of the proposals put forward by various political thinkers and writers. They, of course, react beneficially upon thought. But there is a danger of treating democracy as though it were an end in itself and not a means to an end. One school of thought, for a small example, advocates open diplomacy. But it does not offer a solution of the question which asks: what is to prevent publicity in diplomacy being countered by falsification in the Press? It would be arrogant to criticise any thinker or school of thinkers who know a great deal more about politics than I do. But something that is not necessarily Radicalism, but is certainly radical, must be sought and found growing in the public consciousness itself and hostile in character to present methods and conditions of living.

That in itself suggests education,\* and positively nothing of lasting benefit is possible without

\* Is it possible, for instance, to read Henry James's wonderful "A Small Boy and Others" without conjecturing what an appalling loss it would have been for the world had he been poured into the mould of an English Public School? His unusually free and easy (even slipshod and neglected) kind of education allowed his natural bent to develop unchecked from the very beginning. Henry James seems to have escaped all the struggle to discover his own individual line of work, which vexes the adolescence of so many artists. Nobody planing him down to the tidy mediocrity of the formal average, his mind sought and found its own food.

a revolutionised education, so transfigured as to put a new face upon life. The young ought to be taught to call things by their right names; to face the hard facts of life, but to make those facts beautiful and worthy by the exercise of their own human possibilities. Destroy routine in work and in games, help them to appreciate the beauty of life by making them aware that it is for them to create beauty to match it, and they are no longer taught at all, but drawn out, as the phrase goes. To suggest and inspire and to keep their silly heads clear of shams and a ridiculous aping of them is a duty we owe to childhood. A consideration of the mob-mind cannot exclude a consideration of education.

Consider the architecture of the mass-mind. It is certainly not constructed from the foundation upwards as the collective result of an aggregate number of single minds. So far from faithfully representing the individual mind, it does not even summarise a "class consciousness." Its trunk, perhaps, is made up of the lower middle classes, which, floating between the classes above and the classes below, have no anchorage, fixed principles, and corporate feeling, no permanence and solidity of emotional life. They are "out of touch," and their trivial ambitions and equally trivial recoil affect their whole constitution. They surrender themselves the more flabbily, therefore, to the dead hand of ignorance, prejudice and superstition.

Then, again, this mass-mind only acts upon sug-

gestion.\* It is an instrument played upon by the interests which manufacture and control it. The mass-mind does not live and think and feel. It responds like a sleep-walker to a distant hypnotic pressure. Men do not mean as persons what they say within the radius of the mass-mind. One sees now and again some object—a dead leaf or a little piece of stick—airily supported, it would seem, by its own being, since it does not fall. But, on looking closer, one perceives a tiny, almost invisible thread fastened to some branch or bush overhead which, by swinging the object at its end, gives it a make-believe of independence.

This is a joyful discovery. There is no substantial reality in the mass-mind; it is dangled at the end of a string; guilelessness is its characteristic. At the top end is the innocence of the serpent, at the bottom the wisdom of the dove. The mass-mind has not come into being from within outwards, from the bottom upwards, but derives a fictitious existence from the top downwards. It may be described as a film wrapping away the real and living mind from our sight and its own self-knowledge. The mass-mind is divorced from the human mind, just as the word is divorced from the thing. I confess

\* The conscience and sensibility of an independent being have been dispersed, or this mob-mind would not have been indifferent to the tortures of men "slowly put to death" (as a well-known divine put it) in our savagely barbarous prisons, not for a crime, but a belief. Whether that belief was a mistaken one or not has nothing to do with it. The mass-mind cannot, indeed, as an individual can, judge a case on its merits.

that this simple difference between from the top downwards and from the bottom upwards seems to me of such consequence that it will invade the rest of this book. "All things live, yes even those we call inanimate," writes Mr. Lowes Dickinson. "A soul or a myriad souls inform the rocks and streams and rivers. . . . All things together press upwards, moved by love, to a goal that is good." Man alone, who can out-do the beasts both in good and evil, and appears to have no creature ahead of him in the race, possesses the special faculty of shooting the spires of his mind up towards a further reality. It is true that he excels the master-mole in burrowing. Utopia is not the *ignis fatuus* of an intoxicated fancy, but the logical consummation of building from the bottom upwards. The human foundation is as firm-set as the solar system. The job is to get at it.\*

Thus we come back to the individual, not as an end in himself but as a means to an end, and the effort of true reform should be towards breaking up this mass-mind into the first, second and third persons singular. "I know that personal relations are the real life, for ever and ever," says Helen Schlegel in "Howard's End." Plurality is always the devil, from the plurality of livings to the plurality of thick and soft heads. It is not how much you are worth, or what you were or what you

\* Or to put it in another way. The job is to starve the beast, so carefully nourished by its keeper.

are that matters, but what thou art. This is, of course, only a beginning. But it is good economics, as well as good morals and good art, surely, to begin at the beginning. At any rate, we look, all Europe looks so very much like finishing up at the wrong end, that one may well feel justified in studying the title-page of the book of humanity. But one must study humanity not only as it is, but as it might be, and the buttress of confidence rests upon the authentic fact that humanity cannot be studied potentially except upon the basis of what it is. It is no good talking of humanity unless you take the individual into consideration. But to point out this platitude in an age whose major perplexity, thanks to the twilight of lies in which it gropes, is to perceive the obvious, is genuine if not brilliant, service.

I will fetch anchor upon the sequel to this. The search for the individual implies a search for his "subconscious" mind, the inarticulate mind lying underneath the conscious and deliberate one. That subconscious element is at once the most actual and precious thing in life and the most susceptible to expansion. Its joy and sweetness are so vivid that when it breaks through its conventional envelope the senses intuitively respond to it with a sharpness and buoyancy which only the special electricity of its nature can evoke. It is at the same time the source of all mystery and fantasy, and of the unappeasable longing of man for the perfect and the unknown.

This subconscious principle, to reveal which, to put it into action in practical life, is the truest aim of the reformer, cannot be comprehended by reason alone. Reason, doubt, even scepticism, therefore, are not the scissors which can cut the alimentary canal between the vested interest and the mass-mind and so wither them both. True, all that men do now is the reverse of reasonable. Cap-and-bells stalks gravely in council-chambers and cabinets. But cold, rational science stalks with it. One may put it in this way: A chosen people is one which can put two and two together. With the Press,  $2+2=0$ ; with the public  $2+2=2$ ; with the man of reason  $2+2=4$ ; with the man of perception  $2+2=\text{anything}$ , but not necessarily 4 and certainly not 2 or 0. Ultimately, it will be 1, though it may be 100 first. Perception rather than reason is the drill to probe the subconscious human reality which is the only foundation of a genuine society. Thus, in the second half of this book it will be necessary to discuss the nature of art (for art is perception) and its relation to men. As an anonymous writer puts it, "Thousands of people can talk for one who can think; but thousands can think for one who can see. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy and religion all in one."

The divinations of man are better than his certainties, though, or rather because, he divines what is impossible to achieve. That recognition of an uncapturable beauty, the effort and failure to attain it,

and the wisdom that prompts him to pursue it, are, as a writer in the *Times* put it, the privilege of the great artist. But it is his privilege, only because his inward eye is more sensitive to light than that of his fellows. He graduates the light to our duller optics, dull because we are so cocksure of what we can take in with our normal sight. But mankind can see through as well as with the eye, or great works of art would never have survived, nor men like Shakespeare, Michael Angelo and Beethoven have dwelt within the consciousness of men.

In the meantime, one may say that taste is as good a guide as any. It is superior to reason; it points the way to art; it is impartial in its choice of human residence (it is to be doubted whether there is such a thing as a natural bad taste. Nature herself never—if we except the mandrill—shows bad taste); and instantaneously destructive of the industrial and demagogic mentality. Taste connects people and things and is knowledge of good and evil. It gives a synthetic idea of good and extends that good beyond the boundaries of normal morality. Taste is the way of truth because it has the good on the one side and the beautiful on the other. It is more damning to say of a man that he acted in bad taste than that he was immoral.\*

\* This is a simple illustration. There must be few people who, after reading W. H. Hudson's "Lost British Birds," have not felt a despair of humanity. The extermination of the noblest and most beautiful forms of British bird-life has been due to two vices and two alone—selfishness and bad taste. Under the first heading comes the preservation of pheasants (the "curse of the pheasant") which

Now as the word replaces the thing, so the institution replaces the person. The two are correlative, for a mob and a commercial State are but the two halves of the same thing.

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bids the gamekeeper destroy as "vermin" every species of wild bird and animal preying upon, or supposed to prey upon, or even living in proximity with these semi-domesticated coddlings. Where the gamekeeper begins, the collector ends. There was a report some years ago that a new species of wren had been seen at St. Kilda. A mob of collectors armed themselves, sallied forth and the entire St. Kilda species was immortalised under glass cases. There could not surely be a more blatant example of bad taste than the preference for the stuffed bird in a glass case to the free and living one in its natural home. Cruelty and stupidity (the cruelty and stupidity which persecute the lovely and exhilarating life of wild Nature), may not be "immoral," but are certainly in bad taste. Bad taste might be described as a cutting across the true nature of things, and it expands very far beyond academic æsthetics. Until, in fact, people have the imaginative good taste not to condemn wild birds to solitary confinement (a barbarism common to all classes of the community) and torture creatures in traps that don't kill at once, a happy and ordered society is impossible. It is the attitude that counts. Mind is not a function of the brain (as the scientists say) but of the immortal spirit of life, and until our good taste recognises and reverences that spirit in all its manifestations, social harmony is indeed but a fiction and the quest of knowledge a pedantry.

**T**HE authorising great abuses is not the worst consequence of a bad custom, for these may be at all times opposed with success, but it is the giving credit to certain abuses less palpable and concealing them under a mask of wisdom and an appearance of public utility.      *Sully*

**T**HE aim of the reformer being always to make the State more and more like man.      *Charles Marriott*

**C**Ertainly there is no knowledge more intrinsically true than that which is written in our consciences.      *St. Augustine*

**T**HE Inca system of government was founded on that most iniquitous and disastrous doctrine that the individual bears the same relation to the State as a child to its parent, that its life from the cradle to the grave must be regulated for it by a Power it is taught to regard as omniscient—a Power practically omnipresent and almighty. . . . What wonder that a system so unspeakably repugnant to a being who feels that his will is a divinity working within him fell to pieces at the first touch of foreign invasion and that it left no vestige of its pernicious existence on the continent it had ruled. For the whole State was, so to speak, putrid even before dissolution, and when it fell it mingled with the dust and was forgotten.      *W. H. Hudson*

**R**IGOUR makes nothing but hypocrites.      *Shadwell*

State

## MAN WAS MADE FOR THE SABBATH

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DO not know to what extent Arnold's brief for "sweetness and light," or in other words beauty and intelligence uniting in the pursuit of perfection is remembered nowadays; and there is excuse for forgetting a sometimes sententious, complacent critic who belies the excellence of his poetry. Still I am inclined (with all depreciation) to find in portions of "Culture and Anarchy" a measure of support to the suggestion hereafter to be developed of a fraternity of artists, forming without definite adhesions, policies or constitution, a kind of third estate in the community and, as messengers of good tidings, offering to vexed humanity a gospel of true living and thinking. This notion is not original, since Arnold's discussion of the rival principles of Hebraism and Hellenism; his use of such terms as "right thinking," "a free play of mind," our "best selves"; his detachment from parties and analysis of the barbarian aristocrats, the Philistine middle class and the populace; his adherence to yet a fourth class "Humanity," and his attack upon the Positivists as system-mongers; his criticism of action for action's sake—all these things indicate that, blindly as I

may tread, it is not without guides. I would add that the grain of Arnold's thinking may be harvested into a single sentence:—

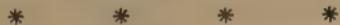
"To my countrymen, with their fatal weakness for machinery, their bent for attaching themselves to this, and losing all sense while they so attach themselves, of the spirit and truth of things, everything in the way of machinery, all that gives them a chance of forgetting the principal in the accessory, the end in the means, is particularly dangerous."

Observe, further, the supreme irony by which Arnold's elastic doctrine is manufactured into a practical need. He requires a collective expression of it, a comprehensive authority embodying the "best selves" of all the individual citizens, as opposed to their ordinary, go-as-you-please egoistic selves—a powerful, synthetic realisation of right thinking and sweetness and light in the name of the higher reason of all. What is this unique Authority which, while not precisely religious, is yet of so sacred a character as to contain and symbolise the loftier aspirations of our people? In the words of the Positivists, repudiated on the preceding page for their bondage to machinery, who is this High Priestess of Humanity? Behold, it is the State!

It is a misfortune of pioneers not to behold other people reaping the fruits of their labours, and it is a pity that Arnold cannot be present in the flesh to

view his Priestess ascending the steps (three at a time during the last three years) of the Temple. Not only have our best selves now been formally incarnated in the State, but the State itself, by arrogating divine powers, has at the same time (quite apart from routing the free thinkers) reassured humanity by providing it with a visible example of the identity between our best selves and the divinity. Those of the weaker brethren, moreover, who are unable to grasp the significance of an ideal abstraction, even when secured from any high-falutin notions of distance and other-worldliness, are enabled to worship a human goddess under the simple and homely denomination of Dora. Thus has been consummated that desirable union between our internal and external selves; thus has the fabric of our earthly being been woven with spiritual strands; here, no doubt, is the origin of that sublime conception of the "Holy War" which both lay and clerical Ministers have preached with much fervour; thus has come to pass that in the words of the poet:—

"A brighter Hellas rears its mountains  
From waves serener far,  
A new Peneus rolls his fountains  
Against the morning star,  
Where fairer Tempes bloom, there sleep  
Young Cyclads on a sunnier deep.



“Saturn and Jove their long repose  
Shall burst (read ‘Have’) more bright  
and good  
Than all who fell, than One Who rose,  
Than many unsubdued:  
Not gold, not blood their altar dowers  
But votive tears and symbol flowers.”

and thus, by the neat economy of compounding the two halves of the sentence, has the problem which intrigued the Pharisees been solved to the satisfaction of both parties—“Render unto the Cæsar-God the things that are the Cæsar-God’s and unto the God-Cæsar the things that are the God-Cæsar’s.” “We do not hate our enemies,” murmured a Christian pastor in Germany. “No, we obey the Divine command to love them. When we kill them, when we inflict untold sufferings on them, when we burn their homes and overrun their territories, we are performing a labour of love.” Grotesque? Not at all. Deify the State and the most atrocious crimes are only a rather more zealous bid for the Divine favour, a rather more vehement indication of “good works” than is customary in the comparatively tepid observances of Christianity.

I do not propose here to propound any theory of the State, its (His) relation to the individual, the extent to which their interests and privileges conflict and co-exist, and the kind of equipoise that can be struck between them. I have no theory.

But the Leviathan State, as it exists to-day, is an anachronism. The motive for its existence belongs to the childhood of social community, when to form an authority to prevent one violent individual from maltreating another was of advantage to the community. But men as individuals no longer carry arms; they have outgrown the primitive condition of internal feud. Or, more accurately, the predatory instinct has been organised into a system of exchange. The State, transferring its *patria potestas* from the individual to the system, has happened at the same time to transfer its *protection* from the one to the other. Men no longer oppress one another; they are oppressed in the name of the higher reason of them all. Our protector has become a greater danger than the aforesaid primitive, even had he the strength of ten thousand men, could ever be.

In practice the State, indeed, would seem to be an embodiment rather of our worst than our best selves. Something all-powerful and awe-inspiring is surely a root-principle of religions, at any rate in their beginnings. But modern States being singularly indulgent to a financial oligarchy, cannot be called omnipotent, nor, being at present directed in England partly by twopenny Tamerlanes and partly by newspaper proprietors who have climbed to eminence upon the shoulders of Desperate Dick and Weary Willie, can our State be said to inspire in us the feelings of an Achilles whom the goddess has caught by the hair.

Throughout long centuries, man has specialised in idolatries, and to the forms of wood and stone which have seduced his heart, stupefied his mind and murdered his self-respect, he has now added the worship of the State. The English are naturally a kindly, decent, well-wishing, lovable people, and vastly more agreeable than the ridiculous ideas they have of themselves.\* They naturally possess what is, perhaps, the finest of qualities—*sensibility* (it is like the stupid English perversity to impersonate themselves in the figure of a brutal and vulgar farmer-buffoon, John Bull), and that is what makes our literature and incidentally, at its ripest, our scholarship the greatest the world has ever known. We have only to compare our treatment of birds with that of our neighbours, allies and enemies on the Continent. Ours is indifferent, but at least we do not eat our finches, tits, and warblers. Let us not despise this illustration. Perhaps the birds are recording cherubs and pipe: “Inasmuch as ye have done it to these little ones. . . .” Yet the English are more easily put upon and bubbled by

\* Indeed, as a forbearing and good-natured race, impartial history would have more than a good word for us. Our revolts have been very rarely bloody, and even the book of our strong is not usually so atrocious as are most European pages. To read the ghastly story of the twenties and thirties of the nineteenth century, when landlord, magistrate and farmer oppressed the labouring men, hanged them (or, worse, transported them on a “recommendation to mercy”) for stealing sheep or even handkerchiefs and half-crowns, is to be filled with a sense of the poor man’s patience in suffering, and of his mercifulness in retaliation. Burned ricks and smashed machinery, after all, felt no pain. There is a sort of equability in the English character which, alas, has not stood it in very good stead. Fit dwellers upon our sweet and homely land such men have it in them to be.

anything high-sounding and pretentious, than the "mercurial" foreigners who, to our fond fancies, are like the Athenians, always running after some new thing. "Here in Patanau," says Mr. Ralph Fitch in Hakluyt, "I saw a dissembling prophet which sate upon an horse in the market-place and made as though he slept, and many of the people came and touched his feete with their hands, and then kissed their hands. They took him for a great man, but sure he was a lazie lubber." Mr. Fitch, at a hazard, was a Celt.

But our inability to see through things and thence to apprehend and associate ideas is not, of course, responsible alone for this many-headed dragon of a modern State. We have faithfully modelled ourselves on Germany (dropping on the journey her detestable "efficiency"), and, like her, have allowed ourselves to be corrupted by the temptation of power and money common to Western Europe. Thus, if we pass judgement on Germany, we do so in a lesser degree on ourselves, and one of the reasons why we imitate Germany is because we ignore the fact that German decadence is not exclusively Teutonic. The cult of mechanism is derived not from a particular nation in Europe, but from a particular epoch in time. This canker, eating away into our healthier tissues, has left us without the spiritual power of counter-resistance. We have allowed the institutionalism of material Power to bedevil us. Having forgotten that people and

things owe their divine origin, not to the State, but to humanity and art, we are delivered over into "the bondage of machinery"—*pseudo-spiritual* machinery. For the cogs, cranks, levers and lubricant of the machine are the tissues, membranes and blood of men.\*

Three years ago an enlightened Prince, Max of Baden, gave an address:—"In this age of grotesque catchwords, it must be said with all emphasis that institutions alone cannot guarantee the freedom of a people. There is only one guarantee—the character of the people itself." Turn from him to the incomparable account of the Dreyfus affair in "Penguin Island":—"The seven hundred Pyrotists could not subvert the proofs of the accusation because they could not know what they were, and they could not know what they were, because there were none." And:—"If he has not been convicted because he is guilty, he is guilty because he has been convicted. I believe in his guilt as every good citizen ought to believe in it; and I will believe in it as long as the established jurisdiction shall order me to believe in it, for it is not for a private person, but for a judge, to proclaim the innocence of a convicted person." Again:—"Summoned before the judges at a public sitting, Colomban immediately perceived that his judges were not anxious to discover the truth. As soon as he opened his mouth, the

\* This machinery happens to correspond with an age of machines, but these machines are only an outward symbol of the mechanisation of living.

President ordered him to be silent *in the superior interests of the State*. For the same reason, which is the supreme reason, the witnesses for the defence were not heard." We are gratuitously supplied with one of the proofs of sanctity that the theocratic, talismanic State can advance. It is religious because it is mysterious, and it is mysterious because no one knows anything about it. A contempt and ignorance, carefully nurtured by the Press, for the actual idea behind the actual thing, keeps men in that sly, clandestine, opaque, inscrutable darkness so proper to worship.

It is the "superior interests of the State," that unquestioned claim, which I have been careful to underline. But before examining it, it will be as well to make it quite clear that with us English the phrase has not yet developed into a recognised doctrine. The idea of the State, even the idea of commerce, is not yet formulated, not yet "set" into an inflexible shape. In England we live from hand to mouth no less in our systems than in our ideas, no less in our spiritual than our material interests. Our systems are as makeshift as our houses. But lest we should make ourselves comfortable by reflecting that it is better to have no ideas and theories than bad ideas and theories, let me remark that Nature abhors a vacuum, and fools rush in where angels fear to tread. In education, the Germans taught discipline, duty and dogma. We were in two minds; or rather in no mind at all. It is the easiest thing in the world for

weeds to grow in virgin soil—for bad ideas to flourish in a mental climate unvisited by any ideas at all. There are no counter ideas to resist them. Thus with loving receptivity have we welcomed to our open arms the German ideas of the State. Their aunt is no less maternal to them than was their own mother. In the second place, the *principle* of the Commercial State is no less present in our midst, for being inarticulate. Institutions appear to have only an immediate and not a predisposing cause and are morally justified in their actual workings. The principle, the philosophy is there all right, but as it were volatilised. It is not the business of the intelligent and well-disposed to indict a blind self-seeking as a deliberate dogma, but to reveal the fact that actions and institutions have their causes and consequences and make implicit a consciousness which in Germany, for instance, was explicit. It is inadmissible to talk of the philosophy of the State, unless this distinction be kept in mind.

Possibly that little phrase “superior interests of the State,” the claw of the lion, the talon of the eagle, the poison fang of the viper, the horn of the unicorn (for it is nothing but a myth) contains more explanation of our deadly thraldom to machinery than could be revealed in all the volumes of Hansard. What is (to cast away the fig leaf of decorous diplomacy) “the good of the State?” The good of the men, women and children who compose it, who *are* it, who pay for it, to whom it belongs. One

hears tales of "Monsieur Un Tel" who "walked about as if the whole street belonged to him." It does. "Do what I tell you," says the parent State to its citizenettes. "I will relieve you of all responsibility and initiative; I will give you order, security, prosperity, education, parks, well-lighted streets, bread and circuses." "Thank you, we prefer to have these things, or do without them, for ourselves." A certain mumming punctilious mediocrity called Louis XIV. has patented one little remark as an offset against his futile and villainous career:—"L'Etat c'est moi." It is: mine and yours and Dick's and William's and Clarastella's and Peter's and Joan's. What further are the interests and good (they are the same thing) of these folk? To develop their lives creatively and amicably, as individuals and members one of another (that is to say, of the community), in beauty, joy and usefulness (in other words, "in spirit and in truth"). It is monstrously unfair to push these elementary conceptions away into the attic as Utopian. They are the breath of common life.

Talk about majorities and minorities cannot cloud the issue. The attempt of a State to coerce a minority (often the salt, the leaven of a people) is to create that condition of things of which coercion was presumed to be the preventive. The fact that the minority does not agree with the majority makes it indispensable. If this State oppresses a single individual, it is committing an act of self-

mutilation. Nor can the majority be all-powerful if it does not include the minority. It is to be doubted, too, at any rate nowadays, whether the word "majority" is not so divorced from the thing as to mean nothing—the tyranny of a mere noun. In the first place a State which usurps to itself an independent, self-contained existence, masquerading as an abstraction and bearing no relation to the needs of the citizens, has nothing to do with either majorities or minorities. It is a kind of aerolite, wandering, an impotent firework, in space. In the next place, when this majority knows no other mind but its newspaper's, it dwindles down into a unity, vested in a few daily sheets of paper.

Mrs. Harris, again, is no more insubstantial than public opinion. To appeal to public opinion as for an infallible sanction of fitness and right is surely a craziness of optimism. Morris called public opinion a bed of Procrustes; but is it ever so positive and solid? It takes the colour of its surroundings, and its hostility is only aroused when it is disconcerted by a colour-scheme at odds with them. But it is curious to note how the less independent public opinion is, the more tyrannical its hostility can be. It is in times of a negative, prostrate public opinion that we feel more keenly the truth of the sagacious Mill's remark:—"Mankind are greater gainers by suffering each other to live as seems good to themselves, than by compelling each to live as seems good to the rest." At any rate, if people—it certainly

behoves us, who are one of the most personable and honest of European peoples, to be less modest—will not take more account of themselves and one another, and allow a necromantic Mumbo-jumbo of a State-Idol to take their own lives and works off their hands (“Individual men cannot shuffle off the business of life on to the shoulders of an abstraction called the State,” said Morris), then they will get the State that they deserve. “The fault, dear Brutus, lies not in our stars, But in ourselves that we are underlings.”

Neither countries nor individuals can be self-governing so long as they permit themselves to be the passive instruments of some impersonal Power, which common folk half in derision, half in awe and fear, generalise as “they,” so long, that is to say, as authority is externalised in a mechanism remote from people’s needs. Founded upon any other postulate, the foes of this Power are not so much Socialism and Individualism as Reality and Experience. When “they” becomes “we,” then, and not till then, shall we dare to sing the hymn of the poet, “The World’s great age begins anew—the golden years return.”

**I**T is clear that men enslave themselves; they suffer from this slavery and yet they believe it inevitable.

*Tolstoi*

**L**AST came Anarchy: he rode  
On a white horse splashed with blood;  
He was pale even to the lips,  
Like Death in the Apocalypse.

\* \* \* \* \*

Then all cried, with one accord,  
“Thou art King and Law and Lord;  
Anarchy, to thee we bow,  
Be thy name made holy now!”

*Shelley*

“**T**HOU shalt not,” writ over the door.

*Blake*

**T**HE disastrous miseries of man’s life, where order, Lawes, Doctrine and Authority are unable to protect Innocence from the exorbitant wickednesse of Power.

*Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke*

**N**EITHER one person nor any number of persons is warranted in saying to another human creature of ripe years that he shall not do with his life for his own benefit what he chooses to do with it.

*John Stuart Mill*

## THE SABBATH WAS MADE FOR MAN—I

Symbol

O much for the general lie of the land. We are at the mercy of a phrase whose meaning is described in the words of Sir William Jones:—"It owns us, we belong to it, we derive the very substance of our soul from the organised community in which we live and which we call the State." *Salus Reipublicae Suprema Lex*—or, in other words, we have adopted a theory from the Romans and their devil's disciples, the German economic-military, whereby we become the private property of five letters of authority which have no existence in reality, except as a convenient symbol of ourselves. Truly, where such credulity is a virtue, falsehood will not be long a vice. Nor is this supreme authority, as false in conception and injurious in action as the divine right of kings, the only claimant upon our unquestioning obedience. For "the good of this" and "the good of that" we pass our lives in a disinterested devotion towards anything on earth but ourselves and our fellows. All the self-destructive crimes of Germany arose from the same cause. They were justified because they were done "for the good of" Germany, and because a sheepish people believed it. "Evil, be thou my good." When I was at Oxford I remember being solemnly reprimanded by the Dean, because

I did not go to chapel frequently enough "for the good of the College." Schoolboys consent to being trained in unrealities, to the perversion of their natural faculties (the ossuaries of knowledge), of their natural energies (set games) and finer apprehensions (*esprit-de-corps*); they are set to build prisons of illusion for themselves and are discharged from them with notions of rules for ethics and routine for life—"for the good of the school." For "the good of the business" the employees of a firm are urged to sacrifice pleasure, hope, honesty and interest in their work, in order to make shoddy and useless things at top speed and at a bare subsistence wage. "For the goods of the business" would be the proper phrase, since in terms of cash everything goes to swell the pockets of one or more individuals who live on the toil of others and produce nothing themselves. The following extract is taken from a report of the proceedings of a Guild Socialist meeting:—"So-and-so criticised the report on the ground that it paid too much attention to the question of women which, in our judgment, is of infinitely small importance compared with the strength and development of the Trades Union movement as a whole." What is "the strength and development of the Trades Union movement as a whole" but the strength and development of the men and women who use the term "Trades Union" as a convenient symbol of their association for the benefit of each one of themselves? If one

portion of a society develops itself at the expense of another, the society ceases to exist. Let the society or "movement," which thinks thus arbitrarily, beware of becoming the enemy it professes to oppose:

"The hand of vengeance found the bed  
To which the purple tyrant fled;  
The iron had crushed the tyrant's head  
And became a tyrant in his stead."

So the thing goes on, until the good of a term, of a figure of speech, is to be interpreted as the ill of the human beings who invent it.\* Thus we come round again to the organisation of an absolute State as the embodiment of our worst selves. William James said that no sooner was an institution founded and secured upon the idea that gave it birth than it went to work to commit parricide. "Mention but the word divinity," wrote Butler, "and our sense of the divine is clouded." Or, to quote Blake again, the St. George of this modern dragon: "Thus man forgot that all deities reside in the human breast."

How is it, then, that we (a people who cut off a king's head and he a lover of the arts, wanting, indeed, in tact, but a mere dabbler in despotism as modern States go) have become so involuntarily devoted? What is the principal result of our self-sacrifice and where, if any, is the remedy to seek?

\* Tolstoi, I think, points out that one of the worst aspects of the State theory is that it makes the whole body of the citizens it sways the accomplices of its crimes. A crime is committed. Who is responsible for it? Nobody, because it is committed in the name of us all; everybody, because no single individual or group of individuals can be charged with it.

The answer nearly always given to the first question is the war. Mention the word "War" and we are saved from inconvenient speculation as the savage is guarded from harm by his amulet. But Ares is too much of a blockhead to set first causes in motion. He is, in fact, so gross a blockhead that even the blindness of men is not sufficient to drive them into his snare, unless they are being pushed into it from behind. War arms the State, but it neither makes the weapons nor the limbs that wield them. Rather it is our old bugbear, Commerce, Finance, Industrialism, the most inhuman system invented in history, that makes the assumptions of the State possible and ourselves resigned to accepting them.

Commerce, for instance, makes the mob-mind, and the mob thinks in phrases. So that, to begin with, we are confronted by the fallacy of looking at classes (the correlative of phrases) and not persons, at woman and not women and so on. Cultivate irreverence, dear countrymen, learn respect and inscribe on your mental phylacteries the tag, "*dolus latet in generalibus*":—

"*Pastor Manders*: 'You call it "cowardice" to do your plain duty? Have you forgotten that a son ought to love and honour his father and mother?'

"*Mrs. Alving*: 'Do not let us talk in such general terms. Let us ask: Ought Oswald to love and honour Chamberlain Alving?'"

We are seduced by generalities (a very different thing from the abstract) and fix our minds upon the

"criminal class," not upon John Smith the errand boy who took the marked half-crown out of the shop-till. We refuse to look at the particular human case.

The effect of these generalities is to give the State a free hand. There is no control over it, because there is no examination into it. It is at liberty to separate itself from us and at the same time to assume by general terms that its actions are identified with us and our well-being. We obey our idol because we believe in it, and we believe in it because it is working "for our good." If we do not obey it, something frightful will happen to us and we shall all go to pieces. Indeed, the matter need not go so far as this. Sheer lethargy of mind and spirit without thought of consequences, alone, will deliver us, has delivered us, into the hands of the State. We cannot be surprised that the State of an industrial age is ready to grasp the occasion.

Therefore the product of the "man-was-made-for-the-Sabbath," the from top-to-bottom theory of life, is compulsion. The State has doubts of our capacity for benevolence. We are, therefore, compelled to benevolence. I gave you all the privilege of living and working under my business men, in my towns, for my wages and my ends, my power and glory, saith the State; you will, therefore, hand over your life and work to me when I want it, saith the State. If you demur, I will put you slowly to death in my prisons, saith the State.

But compulsion is root and branch of the industrial system. “‘Do you not see, my son, that madman who, with his teeth, is biting the nose of the adversary he has overthrown and that other who is pounding a woman’s head with a huge stone?’ ‘I see them. They are creating law; they are founding property; they are establishing the principles of civilisation, the basis of Society and the foundation of the State.’” The modern quarrel, said Morris in his wisdom, is not between Absolutism and Democracy, but Mastership and Fellowship. The unequal distribution of labour on the one hand and of its results upon the other left the lack-allsswith only one counterin bargaining with the have-allsthe power of labour. That they not only sold to their masters—they were compelled to sell it. The alternative was starvation or the workhouse. Although reason refuses to be convinced that they who consume practically all should produce nothing and they who produce all should consume practically nothing, yet this arrangement is a commonplace of economic fact. The system of “plunder and waste” which thus adjusts the balance between those who own and those who use the means of production is foundation, structure, roof and all of modern society. Its defenders have a more elaborate method than denial. They claim (1) that it is beneficial, or (2) that it is inevitable:—

“I heard a devil curse  
Over the heath and the furze;

‘Mercy could be no more  
If there were nobody poor,  
And pity no more could be  
If all were happy as ye;  
And mutual fear brings peace,  
Misery’s increase  
Are mercy, pity, peace.’ ”

This cruelly absurd method of work was really enforced by indirect compulsion; it was your labour or your life. Nor were the compulsion to bad work and dishonesty, the compulsion to poverty and spiritual atrophy the only resource of business. Before domestic flamed into foreign war we were forced to buy and sell things (to make a profit) which nobody wanted and which degraded their possessors. We were forced to live in hideous, ramshackle houses, constructed with an eye neither to use nor beauty, with a maximum of inconvenience and a minimum of common sense. We were forced to walk streets where these houses were rammed formlessly together in endless lines, like a set of “Meditations Among the Tombs” endlessly reprinted in sham vellum. Our men were forced to walk the streets in clothes as drab and neutral as the bindings of school algebras and manufactured not to reveal but encase the lines of the body; we were forced in our sham houses to eat adulterated food and to sit upon shoddy furniture. We put up with dirt, squalor, ugliness, and pretentiousness as the indispensables of our condition.

An eccentric taste and an ample bank balance alone could satisfy men's natural instincts for pleasant and individual surroundings. "Stark utility" or "idiotic sham"—we took it or we left it. The tale is not told, nor can it ever be told. Oblivion, the repository of secrets and the defeat of the chronicler writes its own epic of dust upon twentieth-century Europe in the prison of commercialism.

The doctrine again that man was made for the Sabbath means man the auxiliary of machinery. The use of machinery is defended on the plea that it saves labour; the introduction of it into modern Europe degraded that use by turning skilled workers into unskilled, workers with control over their work into workers controlled by the machines which make the work and by the masters who control both men and machines. Machinery in work has meant no less than mechanism in life. It has cut across what is desirable in life and paid no heed to what is undesirable in work. For to adapt human effort to the strict demands of production and consumption, to treat commodities (including men and women) on the lines of repetition and specialization is, to use the old phrase, "against human nature." Those faculties which cannot expand without ample security, leisure and free play of mind, follow as a matter of course. Machinery caused automatism and subdivision,\* and they

\* The consequence of course in action of subdivision (or as Professor Mackail in his life of Morris calls it more correctly—disintegration of labour) is standard-

themselves (I believe watch-making has ninety different processes) made machinery the tyrant rather than the servant and liberator of human energy. When Butler saw men devitalised by machinery into machines, he abolished machines themselves for fear of their becoming anthropomorphic. Not that the abolition of machinery is either a desirable or logical end of this perversion of it. Machinery, that is to say, is good in its proper place. If you design a thing for machinery, said a friend to me once, well and good. If you imitate a hand-made thing by machinery it is all to the bad. That implies not the abolition, but the development of machinery. J. A. Hobson, dealing in "Work and Wealth" with the problem of man and the machine, says suggestively that machinery should do for the moderns what slave labour did for Athens. The business of machinery, that is to say, is to do the dirty work.

If, then, compulsion was indirect before the war, it was omnipresent and implacable. We should beware, therefore, of taking for granted that the present compulsion will be only a transitory expedient. Economic force has evolved into military force, and the war of classes and competing profiteers into the war of nations. The compulsion to

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ization of work. Work is bound to be mechanical so long as the workman's intelligence cannot circulate into the general body of the work or even affect the value and quality of the isolated portion upon which he is engaged; so long, again, as his knowledge cannot grasp the relation of the parts to the whole.

work slips into the compulsion to fight,\* and if our rights and liberties come tumbling after it is a sign that the disease has "come out." "Tyranny," wrote Motley, "ever young and ever old, constantly reproducing itself with the same stony features, with the same imposing mask which she has worn through all ages, can never be too minutely examined, especially when she paints her own portrait and when the secret history of her guilt is furnished by the confessions of her lovers."

In this general surrender "the superior interests of the State" acquire a more precise meaning. Since the State is independent of the body of the citizens, "for the good of" it means exactly what it says. We had our compulsion for utility (conscription, etc. It is on evil days that we have fallen when "Man-Power" is our name for the human form and the human face divine). Our compulsion for expedience (the abolition of political liberties) was followed up in due time by the compulsion of the sick—"for the good of" compulsion. There was no room here for motive or pretext. The sick were of no use to the State; they possessed no privileges, they asserted no strength, they made no resistance, nor by the holding of any subversive theories, could

\* This point does not touch the ethical question of whether, having fallen into the war, we should have to fight in it. Though so much is made of it, it is not a relevant issue. But the predisposing causes of the war are of an importance that cannot be exaggerated.

they have excited its cruel hand to close upon them. They were the most pliable because the most helpless material for the exercise of Power, for the good of, or in other words, for the sake and gratification of Power. Two years ago I saw with my own eyes a man with elephantiasis in the legs, stripped bare after waiting in a crowded room for eight hours without food or drink and being heartily slapped for their diversion by a couple of elderly military doctors. I might have been excused had I reflected at the time that that portion of the newspaper-fed public, which tolerated such brutalities, "had at last succeeded in persuading themselves that their Divinity would be extremely offended if they hesitated to ascribe to him the attributes of a fiend." I should have been wrong, since hundreds of such details which hardly the most insensitive of *free* judgements would condone were but the automatic proof of the pudding in the eating, as automatic as the round of the seasons and the effect of a system ultimately founded upon defrauding people and debasing things—by force. Let us, the people of England, that is to say the soldiers, the workmen, the poets and the thinkers, not forget the crimes of these wretches. Let us punish them by our mercy and degrade them by the peaceful strength of our hearts!

For State coercion shows itself yoke-fellow to commercialism when seen from the human point of view. The principle of conscription, for instance,

apart from the suffering and ill-conduct it causes, and its shameful political and ethical reactions, denies the human law that one man's meat is another man's poison. It mechanically simplifies human variety. That uniformity is the great seal of industrialism. In Henry James's critique on Balzac occurs the following:—"The fatal fusions and uniformities inflicted on our newer generations, the running together of all the differences of form and tone, the ruinous liquefying wash of the great industrial brush over the old conditions of contrast and colour, doubtless still have left the painter of manners much to do, but have ground him down to the sad fact that his ideals of differentiation, those inherent oppositions from type to type, in which drama most naturally resides, have well nigh perished." Commerce, which sees all men as one man and simplifies that one man as a mechanical quantity, is not only remote from the facts of life and a stranger in the vari-coloured workshop of Nature; it is the anæsthetic that prepares the patient for the operations of a sovereign State.

Warring, too, upon the individual, the commercial State inevitably wars upon itself. "Getting and spending we lay waste our powers" is a kind of summary of commercial economics. This waste involves society in a condition of fierce and interminable warfare. A society that spends itself in tearing the means of livelihood from its members is not a commonwealth, but a pack, to which the rooks

could teach better manners and citizenship—no society at all, but an anarchy. I am speaking not of foreign, but civil war. Groups of competing capitalists who fire or wish to fire silver bullets at each other for the privilege of exploiting the undeveloped resources of backward countries, must first collect the financial ammunition for the foreign gamble from their own countrymen, by the thinly disguised methods of war.

For the ethical source of commerce or its development in finance, its *primum mobile* is self-interest. It plays the game of "Beggar-my-Neighbour," it puts a premium upon fraud and its axiom is that one man's gain is another man's loss. It is founded on the denial of the law of the Decalogue: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods." Except in clothes and in weapons and the extension of his field of operations there is no capital difference between the financier (except that he keeps personally out of the way) and the mediæval robber baron. Evolution plays us some strange tricks. It is "a long, long way" from Lorenzo the Magnificent to the coal-baron and the oil-king, from the robbery at Gadshill to the fraud of the modern company promoter.\* Modern Europe, in adopting the Industrial System, gave a blank cheque and a moral certificate to the predatory appetite. As that charming innocent, Ingersoll,

\* "Is the Jew of the usury-gold becoming the despot-king of Commerce?" wrote Meredith.

puts it, "the teaching of Christ is no longer practical, as it does not suit our industrial times."

Now if people produce things for what they may get out of them, competition will automatically arise for the fruits of what they produce. Where men compete, they will covet, where they covet they will acquire, and where they acquire they will fight to retain and to seize more. Where they compete again, some will gain and some will lose. The losers retaliate on the gainers, the gainers on the losers, and all things are confused to ill. The world to-day is convulsed by

"That vain low strife [power,  
Which makes men mad, the tug for wealth and  
The passions and the cares that wither life  
And waste its little hour."

We cannot wonder that the moral chaos of this age fathers its domestic and international anarchy. Plutus is a more powerful monarch than Pluto.\* It is better to fight for a drab (as they anciently fought at Troy) than for a trade monopoly. Force is the natural consequence of this strife, and an autocratic State founded upon force of a commercial system founded upon strife.

\* We surrender the honours of life, the best positions in society, every prestige, illimitable power and ethical advantage—to whom? To the man of tried merit, of intellectual calibre, of insight and sympathy? We abandon them to the man who has enough money to keep thousands of his fellow-creatures in the pleasures and necessaries of life, and to the man who is responsible for denying them. To the man who increases men's wants and at the same time decreases the value of what they get; who buys below value and sells above it, and who sacrifices human lives by forced and unnatural labour to his own interests!

But the real trouble of material Power is the philosophy of automatism, the compulsion of necessity which it half consciously encourages. Men who cease to believe in themselves and in the work of their hands and brains are not so destitute of faith as to be fobbed off with a tin god. The best and the worst of it is that they must have spiritual compensation. Therefore, driven by the pressure of industrial determinism, prevented from choosing their daily work, from exercising their native talent upon it and from making it pleasurable, interesting and important, swung out of their individual orbits into the vast and complex one of an authority whose ends they do not understand and whose workings they do not share, they come to resign themselves to the conception of an impersonal force as inevitable as it is malignant and inhuman. The name of this Até of eternal night is what a first-rate article in the *Times Literary Supplement* described as Human-Nature-Being-What-It-Is. Naturally, it is sacrilege to cut off Medusa's head by denying her existence. The way to appease her is by thankfully accepting and even reinforcing the evil for which she is responsible. Thus savages perform propitiatory rites of blood and terror to their demons. Men will not abolish the bogeys created out of their own helplessness and fear until they see that "the things which we have been used to look upon as necessary and eternal evils are merely the accidental and temporary growths of past

stupidity and can be escaped from by due effort and the exercise of courage, goodwill and forethought."

On the contrary, they are turned into a good. Mungo Park, in his African travels, relates how, in Teesee no woman was allowed to eat an egg. "This prohibition, whether arising from ancient superstition or from the craftiness of some old bushman who loved eggs himself, is strictly adhered to and *nothing will more affront a woman of Teesee than to offer her an egg.*" Take away somebody's right and he will be mortally offended if you offer him it back. In "Erewhon" the young man who surreptitiously devoured beef-steaks when it was against the law, suffered such grievous pangs of conscience that he killed himself. Take away somebody's necessity and (be he an honest man) he will die of shame if he take it back again. Duty, separated from nature and common sense, so readily becomes fatalism.

Indeed no progress is possible unless we can use our minds to sever what is inevitable from what is accidental and can make them up to get rid of the latter, so far as it impedes our free development as men. For man's salvation is prevented by no bogeys, devils or idols—but by himself; it is secured by no bribes or hostages to gods or fortunes—but again by himself. But fatalism is the right hand of material Power. Power compels men not to resist it; fatalism makes a voluntary pact with men not to

resist it. What has happened can be undone or rectified by those to whom it has happened; what must happen can be safely left to take its appointed course, since it is beyond men's collective energy. For men themselves allow the evil from which they suffer. Power, political expediency, State heathenism do not cause men's public actions to contradict their private convictions. Christian men are metamorphosed into idolaters; kindly men into ministers of persecution; honest men into accomplices of venality and corruption; men who love beauty, as it is the nature of men to do, acquiesce in the brutal tyranny of ugliness. It is the hypnotism of necessity works all these miracles. Lovers of men, and of the things they can make and use, must learn to overcome that compulsion of the soul, the pander to the compulsion of the body, before the world can be set free, as it could so easily be set free, were we not so fearfully and helplessly bound by the dark misgiving that it cannot.\* "And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

\* The war for peace, for liberty, for democracy, has been won. Peace hurriedly prepares for another war, liberty imposes forcible slavery upon friends and foes impartially, democracy is engaged in the manly charge of starving German babies to death. Do we regard these things as inevitable? Then the human race is shortly predestined to extinction.



**Q**UE si quelque affaire t'importe  
Ne la fais point par procureur.

*La Fontaine*

**T**HEIR small money is almonds, which oftentimes they  
use to eat. *Hakluyt, "Ralph Fitch's Voyage"*

**W**E are nothing more than the creatures of that anti-nomic abstraction the State, which makes of each individual a slave in the name of all, each individual of which all, taken separately, will desire the exact contrary of what he will be made to do. *Edouard Rod, "Le Sens de la Vie"*

**H**UMAN beings in their present condition may be likened to bees in the act of swarming, as we see them clinging in a mass to a single bough. Their position is a temporary one, and must inevitably be changed. They must rise and find themselves a new abode. Every bee knows this, and is eager to shift his own position as well as that of the others, but not one of them will do so until the whole swarm rises. The swarm cannot rise, because one bee clings to the other and prevents it from separating itself from the swarm, and so they all continue to hang. It might seem as if there were no deliverance from this position, precisely as it seems to men of this world who have become entangled in the social net. Indeed, there would be no outlet for the bees if each one were not a living creature possessed of a pair of wings. *Tolstoi*

**E**ACH (of the stone statues) was terrible after a different kind. One was raging furiously as in pain and great despair; another was lean and cadaverous with famine; another cruel and idiotic, but with the silliest simper that can be conceived—this one had fallen and looked exquisitely ludicrous in his fall—the mouths of all were more or less open, and as I looked at them from behind I saw that their heads had been hollowed. *Samuel Butler*

AS I sit at my work at home, which is at Hammersmith, close to the river, I often hear some of that ruffianism go past the window of which a good deal has been said of late. As I hear the yells and shrieks and all the degradation cast on the glorious tongue of Shakespeare and Milton, as I see the brutal reckless faces and figures go past me it rouses the recklessness and brutality in me also, and fierce wrath takes possession of me, till I remember, as I hope I mostly do, that it was my good luck only of being born respectable and rich that has put me on this side of the window among delightful books and lovely works of art, and not on the other side, in the empty street, the drink-steeped liquor shops, the foul and degraded lodgings. I know by my own feelings and desires what these men want, what would have saved them from these lowest depths of savagery: employment which would foster their self-respect and win the praise and sympathy of their fellows, and dwellings which they could come to with pleasure, surroundings which would soothe and elevate them; reasonable labour, reasonable rest. There is only one thing which can give them this —art.

*William Morris*

## THE SABBATH WAS MADE FOR MAN—II

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**W**E come, then, to the last of the questions proposed in the last chapter. Where is the remedy to seek? Some men think that as the whole apparatus of force and power lives by automatism, so will it automatically collapse—that the contradiction of moral consciousness explicit in the modern kingdoms of this world has gone as far as it will go. For beyond them, as Butler says, “there is another within which the writs of this world’s kingdoms do not run,” and we can finally escape the writ *that* kingdom serves on us only at the cost of a moral insolvency that spells dissolution. Mankind, in other words, cannot ignore the principle of fellowship without ceasing to be mankind.

Such is not only the law of Man, but of Nature, of the universe. Nature (and art as well) plays infinite variations upon very few themes, upon one theme which may be called the glory of God, or anything you like. But the theme is not lost in the variations or the variations in the theme, and democracy, therefore, is a very real thing indeed, since it is expressive of, and in harmony with, the divine law of the universe. The best of modern science again is becoming so Wordsworthian as to dis-

cover the idea of pleasure in all the manifestations of the non-human world. Observation has tardily come to endorse the intuition that every flower enjoys the air it breathes. The new-old doctrine of Nature red in tooth and claw goes the way of rationalism. What man that loves Nature has not read into her a secret innocence, the purity of which her outward seeming cruelties do not really mar? Possibly, we call Nature "red in tooth and claw" because man, in the shame of his own worse (because organised, deliberate and superfluous) savageries, was constrained to make Nature his accomplice. For Nature is not actually either wasteful or cruel. What makes her seem so is our gloom and monopoly in unhappiness which we cast over her as a pall of glib philosophy. Each species, in exquisite proportion and balance, enjoys its own life and supplies life to others. It is we, in our greed and insensibility, who overweigh that balance and point, in the vindication of our theories about her, to the consequences.

Part of this sense of new values is due to the recognition of death as a natural law. It has been left for man to invent useless fear and suffering in living and in dying—who, as soon as you suggest to him that the joyful law of our being is creative and not destructive, and that he should do pleasant and sensible things, invokes all his thunders upon you. For birds, animals, and insects in the natural state approach death as unconsciously and appropri-

Wimble (Fair)

ately as a falling upon sleep, nor do they suffer in the preliminaries to it. A merciful paralysis of sensation (also experienced by human beings in the grasp of beasts of prey) seizes upon them and kills the gnawing worm of fear and pain within them. Neither, in the fullness of their strength, do animals of the same species kill one another in their rivalries of courtship. The discomfited one retires to nurse his powers and return the victor in the following year. Sport is theirs, mating, parenthood, the pleasure of the daily task and the unconscious satisfaction of passing their lives in perfect accord with natural laws. However far we separate, as Herbert says, Nature from the God of Nature, there is surely a divine essence in the solemn expression of thanksgiving which all the works of the Lord render unto him the Lord of life, joy and growth.

“No mercy-seat of gold,  
No dead and dusty cherub, nor carv'd stone,  
But his own living works did my Lord hold,  
    And lodge alone  
Where trees and herbs did watch and peep  
And wonder, while the Jews did sleep.”

When, therefore, Nature denies to us now the fruits of her womb and the comfort of her spirit, I am content to leave the moral verdict upon our ways to her.

We should, however, be discussing remedies, not consequences. Competitive Commerce has grown up into High Finance, private into State

capitalism, covert force into open violence. We need not point to any particular Junkers of the European nations and post them up as designing tyrants. They are inevitable, automatic symptoms of war, as the war is the symptom of mechanical industrialism and mechanical industrialism of the Sabbath theory of life, of the loss of the human being in his institutions, of the text in the commentary, of God in graven images. We are beginning to see, in fact, that every effect has a cause and that the odd division of the world between autocratic mobs and democratic States has produced certain results Pangloss alone can explain. Mastership of life and work is the enemy and Fellowship of life and work our aim.

Is current Socialism, then, the remedy? Some of its doctrinaires are ready to tinker up a system that is past mending; some to get rid of a system for which they have an alternative no less external. One school has had its theories parodied to absurdity by the existing government. Another, narrow and didactic, is not so much a class movement as a section-of-a-class movement and its plans, not being founded upon any large knowledge of existing details lack a constructive philosophy for bridging the transition from things as they are to things as they should be. Even if these plans would work when established, they cannot be attained *per saltum*; and without an adequate bridge over the chasm, we shall all fall into it and never set foot

upon the promised land. It was just the same with the old Social Democratic Federation. When one enquired how production for profit was to be changed into production for use, the answer always was: "Oh, the workers will take over the instruments of production," or "Those things will come right of themselves when the time comes." Modern Socialism, too, like modern society, has suffered a paralysis of the spirit for which a prolonged war is partly responsible. I say partly, because its own mechanical officialism—impotent, academic, opinionated, uncultivated—left its constitution unable to resist the spiritual negation of the war. Its inadequate and really bad, though very natural ideal of a minimum of work for a maximum of pay has not been strong enough to stand up against the general collapse of 1914.\*

Is the remedy Pacifism, Radicalism, a Minimum Wage,† etc.? Though good philosophies in their way, they will not prevent tyranny, exploitation or the wearisome divisions of classes and feuds of

\* These lines were written months ago, and adding this note at the beginning of December, 1918, I see reason to believe that official Labour has not only a policy, but a vision. Upon the expansion of that vision depends the future of mankind. But if that vision is contracted by narrow and sectarian aims, if it does not involve a new philosophy of life, radically different from the negation of life it is destined to replace, there will be no health in it, nor will England be that community of individuals which it is our hope to see replace the Labour Party.

† As for Liberalism and Toryism:—"For above seventy moons past there have been two struggling parties in this Empire under the names of Tramechsan and Shamechsan, from the high and low heels of their shoes, by which they distinguish themselves."

nations. For they do not sound the heart or test the blood, or redress the nervous system of men. They rearrange and redistribute the mechanism of life upon its existing basis. There is little more meaning to life under them, beneficent as they are, than under the present system. The anxiety, strain and tragedy of living are eased off, but not encountered in their strongholds, upon their first principles.

I have no desire to scout these and other remedies, being neither politician nor sociologist, and so hardly qualified either to discuss or reject these "isms." But, I confess distrust of them, unless behind their proposals there is a faith in the restoration of the human being. Otherwise, the "masses" will still be toiling to live, living to toil under the same fetish of production for production's sake, and the same destiny of infernal drudgery. They will not feel the spiritual desire to do their work well, so long as that work is not worth doing well. The fact that they are adequately paid for it, or have a nominal or even actual representative in Parliament, that they do not have to fight to prevent the covetous of other lands from making a ferocious bid for its results, what difference do these things make? I repeat that so long as men do their work merely for the material advantages they or others can get out of it, they will envy one another and so fear one another and so fight one another, and the old cycle of wars and militarism and dictator States return.

Nostrums, palliatives and *douceurs* may be very well in their way, but Whitley Reports, arbitration treaties (international or industrial), even such plausible remedies as Universal Suffrage will be no more than the lopping of branches, unless the whole philosophy of this system is got at, not the effects of that philosophy in action. The volcanic eruption of the war itself is the effect of the subterranean fires below. Free Will and Fate are really the cause and effect of existence. It is the divine law that man actually creates his own world in which he lives. Every conceivable condition, circumstance, sensation, act, environment are before him and await his sovereign choice. But he must infallibly accept the consequences of that choice. Now that he has betrayed the gift of choice by surrendering it, and has suffered the consequences, it befits him to exercise power of choice afresh.

"Isms," then, are either stumbling-blocks or temporary expedients. The only system that can finally replace the existing one of material Power is a rule of life which will gradually slough systems off.\* "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither shall they say, Lo here! or Lo there! for behold the kingdom of God is within you"—not outside in the Houses of Parliament or Government Offices, or the Cabinet, or the Churches, or the Fabian Society, or the Mansion

text

\* To put it feebly. If man must resign his power, when necessary (as on ship-board) to others, let it be at his own choice and determination.

House, or the Chamber of Commerce, or the Labour Party, or Matthew Arnold's external embodiment of our "best selves." There is nothing Utopian about it. The kingdom of God *is* within us, not might be or shall be or ought to be. Or if we concede a point and allow it to be an ideal, then in the words of Conrad—"an ideal is but a flaming vision of reality."\* Some such conclusion is inevitable. External and irresponsible Power is obsolete, its doctrine is played out; it is a tale told by a State idiot, fit only to draw old men from the chimney-corner. It is an obstinate pedantism and hardly needs the acute particular, the —*n*th power of German submissiveness and German Hubris, to prove the absurdity of its universal application. Men are gentlefolk; they are the servants of the divine law, the law of the divine freedom within them. One remembers that marvellous scene of the rejection of Falstaff, in which the mob of the theatre thought they had their way, but in which Shakespeare really had his. For it was not a cold-blooded young scoundrel throwing over his boon companion when it suited his ends. The issue was broader than that. Ruthless, conscienceless Power, in the person of Henry V, threw over the free human element in the person of Falstaff. Shakespeare knew it and stated the facts.

\* Cultivate a child's imagination; develop his sensibilities; teach him true values and a respect for life (human and natural); turn him loose into it with the assurance that he will never want (why do the majority of men pass their lives in seeking to make money? To be able to live), and put congenial work in his way—is this the Aladdin's lamp of a Utopian magician?

Mere rebelliousness leads nowhere, and the only catchword admissible is the common good of individuals. That, perhaps, is the one rubric which promises the happiness and development of every human being in the community to the extreme capacity of his actual wants and powers, as distinguished from his illusory appetites. As Charles Marriott, one of the very few practical visionaries of the times, says: "The truly personal is the truly universal." For the personal is only truly realised in the universal (as every individual work of art tells the tale) and there is finally no quarrel between the individual and the community. We have to achieve separateness not only before we achieve unity, but *in order* to achieve it. The differences between the individual and the community only become acute in a society maintained upon gross inequalities and upon a distribution of work, enjoyment and responsibility so partial as to support the individual at the cost of the community and the community at the expense of the individual. Those who think ill of the world make ill of it, and men's minds being warped by a competitive system whose ethic is mistrust, bad faith and self-interest, conceive society as always sacrificing the individual to its own alien ends and the individual exploiting society for what he can get out of his chances. Society now actually nourishes and protects the individuals that do it the most injury.

These false glosses overlay the essential truths—

that it is in men's own interest to get rid of the *lex talionis*\*; that man cannot get on without his fellows or his fellows without him; that he is a social creature and not the gregarious brute war tries to make him; that the instinct for moral truth which man alone preserves unchanged through all the fashions of all the ages is compatible with the corresponding instinct for joy; that men encroach upon their neighbours to their own as well as their neighbours' loss; that society by encouraging a few favoured individuals to prey upon the rest, fosters the abnormal on the one hand and the subnormal on the other, and so on.

We are told that men's wants must always trespass beyond their natural boundaries, and by restricting those of other men, create a state of perpetual war only to be regulated by penalty and constraint. But since an artificial society supplies and cultivates fictitious wants, the categorical imperative has no authority. We cannot afford to make these absolute hypotheses about human nature when we remember that for the past hundred years we have been selecting for survival not the best, but the most predatory type.

The alternative of the common good must be tried if only as a means to self-preservation. The individual has his best chance in a co-operative

\* It is to be feared that the law claims a far wider obedience than that which is granted it within the narrow limits of war. It is not confined to the Laputan practice of killing a German applewoman in nominal revenge for the murder of an English sempstress.

fellowship; the fellowship where its members are not units but persons with what diversity and vitality they possess to lend to the community and receive back in greater measure. We cannot continue for ever to be ruled on the principle of cutting off the nose to spite the face. History, indeed, gives no testimony for men's collective greed and ambition; it is a witness rather to their excess of modesty. They are so modest that history is apt to ignore them for less shrinking human beasts of prey.

In spite of its vagueness as a phrase, the idea of and respect for the human being are a genuine way out of the "Sabbath" theory. He is the basis of civilisation; the stone that the builders of civilisation have rejected.

To venture more definitely, the restoration of people to themselves and their work to its intrinsic interest might possibly begin by a drastic decentralisation. Centralisation is like a dull, obese belly draining the members of their health and vitality—like a neutral-tinted map of England with a staring red blot for London. People might at any rate acquire a new self-importance, a new opportunity for exploring themselves and one another, were they less conscious of being swung gloomily and fatally at the end of strings round a rusty iron maypole. Were some kind of centrifugal movement to set in and the magnetic attraction of a hard and remote force weakened, then people, escaped from the limited liability company of fear, hatred, gain,

and all human unprofitableness might take stock of one another.

Little communities (one becomes enamoured of little things, "things that you may touch and see" in a world of monstrous chimeras) might be formed according to men's tastes and affinities, communicating by fresh streams of thought, interest and exchange with other communities, like a chain of lakes and streams. Little townships are not the prerogative of the Middle Ages, but the privilege of imagination, and, therefore, hostages of reality. These settlements, stable, but not stagnant, would be self-supporting and self-creative. They would make their own public buildings and their own houses and meet in their own halls. The more they learned to rely on themselves, the less would they refer to any central authority. The unit of government would be the free township; of labour the free association according to trade. The township would run the raw material, the association its product. Each community would produce and own its own resources and employ them to the best advantage of utility and beauty. Other groups might be itinerant. Bands of players, for instance, would visit the townships, hire their theatres and act their own plays in them.\* Painters with their apprentices would hire their *bottega* from the township, decorate its halls and libraries and at the

\* See two admirable articles signed "B" upon this subject of the drama in successive numbers of the *Nation* (March, 1918).

same time realise an informal bond of association with the *bottegas* of other towns. Or take printing. Each township would possess its own founts and presses; the printers in close co-operation with the authors would publish books from them. What an art of printing should we have! To go upon actual evidence alone, compare the delightfully varied and beautiful types at Douay, Lyons, Tours, etc., in sixteenth-century France with the dull uniformity of latter-day printing in the capitals of the great nations. The noble fraternity of cooks would lease the town kitchens. . . .\*

The intensity of local life, character and art need never harden into prejudice and exclusiveness, if a constant "to-ing and fro-ing" of independent producers kept the towns aerated with new ideas and diverse manners. Ownership and creation, movement and stability should always balance, fructify and interpenetrate each other. "*Fay ce que voudras*" would be carved in letters of oak over the town-hall. For a pure and absolute Communism is

\* Morris in his evidence before the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction emphasised the dislocation between the artist and the designer. Unless the artist and the craftsman are in touch, unless both understand the material and the process from beginning to end, unless final value is estimated not according to the design, but according to the actual thing turned out, quality can never be guaranteed; nor—which is a greater matter—can the divisions between one class of men and another be healed. This community of work existed, needless to say, in the Art Workers' Guild, but is, of course, absent from the modern conception of industry. Indeed, one of the great evils of modern commerce can be traced to the separation of the business man from actual contact with the thing being made. So far from being a responsible person, he has no share in the work at all.

the ultimate end of goodwill, whether people acknowledge it or not, or whether they judge it too remote or impossible for effort. Its hypothesis is unchallengeable. "News from Nowhere" is not only a charming playground of the idealist, it is an imaginative projection of first principles in terms of life.

But these hypothetics of a "Federation of Independent Communities," of course stretching over and beyond national limits, are idle, not because they are a crust thrown to starving fantasy, but because, if the art of life does become the conquest of men, their notions of intercourse, their ideas of growth and security and their creative methods will readily fall into a practical harmony and proportion. If, on the other hand, force, plunder and waste (supported by our hatreds, fears and resignation) call upon us after the war for still greater sacrifices of our hopes, still more complete surrenders of our vitality, it were better for us that, with the paper-roll already tied about our necks, we should be cast into the basements of Carmelite House.

An article by an American woman describing her experiences of the Bolshevik revolution in Petrograd, contained these two sentences:—"The average Russian has a dual personality—he is both a brute and an angel. But if you expect him to be an angel he'll be one." So with all mankind. The existing order expects every man to be a brute; or

bullies him into brutishness; or defrauds him of his angelic qualities. Humanity is coming to a pass at which it must trust itself or its idols:—

“Though floods shall fail and empty holes  
Gape for the great bright eyes of seas,  
And fires devour stone walls and trees—  
Thou, soul of mine, dost think to live  
Safe in thy light and laugh at these?”

We come to the conclusion then that just as words are used for expressing things, so the Sabbath is made for man. The person creates the institution for his benefit and not for the benefit of the institution.

But this is not enough. The mass-man is usually more degenerate than the man himself. Yet man is necessarily a microcosm of society, to whatever extent society distorts him. Just as the theory of the modern autocratic State has long ceased to express man, so in the little State of himself he has to fall back upon the inner consciousness, which is to him what he is to the State. Some men, debauched by power, have in themselves done to that consciousness what, as representatives of the absolute State they have done to men in general. Yet even in this apotheosis of human folly, vile men are few if fools are many. It is only that their activities have more scope and their crimes spread wider devastation. But men and women, in so far as they are obedient dupes of automatism, must bear something of the

consequences. *Qui vult decipi decipiatur.* The innocent are always paying for the guilty, the intelligent for the stupid, the seers for the blind. On their shoulders are borne the sins of the world. But innocence, clairvoyance and reason are rarer even than vileness. The soul of man, like property nowadays, is somewhat unevenly distributed.\*

People require, that is to say, a plan and tools with which to construct a fellowship. They require a natural vent for the exercise, the display in action of goodwill. It is no good building ships unless there is water to sail them on. What should be possible is to find a common reckoning for any

\* It may interest my readers to know that shortly after I had written this book, I received a letter from a young soldier with whom I had talked over my subject-matter. "Since my experiences," he writes, "I have become an out and out aristocrat of the old order, viewing the mob with disgust and abhorrence. Eighty per cent. of the people I meet "are totally ignorant; fifteen per cent. have a little knowledge worse than no knowledge; five per cent. are intelligent." "They believe what is told them like a flock of sheep"; "their height of amusement is halfpenny nap, the height of joy is a drunken bout." "They fight over their food like jackals." "Dirt, bestiality, sexual intercourse, the foulest talk from morning to night, the most brutal types predominant, a welter of degraded passions, a moral and physical putrescence" "indescribable"—such is his bitter refrain, culminating in—"I have no use for this rabble." I quote his letter and confess its heavy weight upon me, that I may not be dismissed as altogether a theory-spinner, and wandering as far away from truth as a successful politician. Does this cry of pain invalidate my case—for the prosecution? Such is the path of war. For the defence? If my readers think the latter, it is their affair. I think otherwise, but I must leave it to them. If there is no hope in the spirit of man, if there are no substantial grounds for a belief in the restoration of the human being, if an iron rule is all we are fit for and art and love are the vanity of speculative intellects—then the sooner the human race gives place either to the innocent animals or a higher order of being, the better for the self-respect of the universe. Who believes that? Poor wretches, denied all the blessings of life, freedom, a sane, natural and healthy environment, the comradeship of women, security, joy, *worthiness of labour*—in short, everything worth having—who are we to scorn them?

proposal made—a common appliance for a common agreement. “The bird a net, the spider a web, man friendship.”\* The work of man’s hand, heart and brain is the cement, the shape, and the fruit of that friendship. People have to be supplemented by things, life to find its complement in art. The theologian taught men to love things in God; the time has come round again to love God in things.

For we are not faced by different *genera* of perdition, however different the species. We read with a proper shame the *pronunciamientos* (sayings are too modest for them) of that poor, self-intoxicated Zimri of the nations, the Kaiser:—“Recruits! you have given *me* the oath of allegiance before the altar and the servant of the Lord. You are still too young to comprehend the true meaning of what has been said here, but first of all take care ever to follow the orders and instructions that are given to you. You have taken the oath of allegiance to *me*; this means, children of my guards, that you are now *my* soldiers, that you have given yourselves up to *me*, body and soul. But one enemy exists for you—*my* enemy. With the present Socialistic intrigues, it may happen that I shall command you to shoot your own relatives, your brothers, even your parents (from which may God preserve us!), and then you are in duty bound to obey my orders unhesitatingly.”

\* The following extract comes out of a newspaper:—“A road leading to a German internment camp in East Kent has been closed to foot traffic owing to the practice of girls waving their hands to the prisoners.” Imperishable human spirit, you shall not die!

Thus the *Enfant Terrible* of a State Authority who lets the cat out of the bag. It is lucky for us that here is the man who reveals the logical absurdity of the efficient and modern Sabbath, which, saddling the “labouring Titan” with Armies, Bureaucracies,\* Finance, War, and other loads of the kind, keeps his hands as full as the White Knight’s. Our pack is so burdensome that words themselves

“Struggle with the weight  
So feebly of the False, thick element between  
Our soul, the True and Truth!”

Yet (as in Browning’s simile of bathing):—

“We must endure the false, no particle of which  
Do we acquaint us with but up we mount a  
pitch  
Above it, find our head reach truth, while  
hands explore  
The false below.”

If that is to say we can begin to see clearly not this Importance or that Importance, but all the Importances, not confined to single nations, doctrines or manifestations†—but all the effect of a system which sanctions men’s preying upon their neighbours for gain, then one day, perhaps, men them-

\* They call it 92 committees: we think rather of the myriad green fly on a rose branch. But the more diseased the rose the greater the aphidian multitude.

† In what way, for instance, is the “sacred egoism” of the robin-eating Italians morally superior in principle to Prussian Imperialism?

selves, it may be generations ahead, will begin to turn their eyes inward and discover that they themselves and not a lot of stuffed dummies are the important thing. Nor is this mere optimism. If they see one another clearly and not through the smoked glass of Authority, they will see good men and bad for what they are, not for what Privilege and Banishment, Property and Destitution make them.

In a comparatively recently discovered manuscript of the New Testament occurs a passage describing how Christ saw on the Sabbath a shoemaker at work and said to him:—"Man, if thou knowest what thou dost, blessed art thou, but if thou knowest not, thou art condemned." *Il faut cultiver notre jardin.*

For what men unjustly take, they will keep by force. Competition not of excellence, but of cheapness, implies that spiritual goods may be sold for a farthing, and a vested interest in possessions predicates another in the soul. The correlative of ugliness is seen to be brutality; or, rather, ugliness translated into terms of human action, reveals itself in brutality. Shoddy goods mean shoddy government; a Stock Exchange of money, a Stock Exchange of lives. Hell, like heaven, has many mansions—some hovels, some jerry-built villas, some neo-Corinthian-Byzantine palaces of mart, some barracks, some factories, but they are all in the same metropolis.

We have, therefore, to aim at a synthesis of replacement. The medicine of monotony of work and a dead level of average character is diversity and change in life and labour. That of exclusiveness and competition is fellowship; of force, persuasion and of fraud faith. We sweep human beings into herds; it is time we distinguished them. The common-good is a substitute for the mob-mind, demagogery and newspaper-fodder, and so on. The seismic convulsions of Shakespeare's tragedies did not end in exhaustion, and in dark rites of atonement; they were replaced and covered by the verdure of young love, from whose warm, joined hands rose up like birds, the spirits of tolerance and reconciliation.

But there is yet another alternative to which modern Socialism, should it rely upon a mere transference of power from one set of officials to another, will pay no heed. For democracies and commodities let us try—people and things and for the counting-house and the armament factory—the workshop.\*

In order, therefore, to introduce the two to each other and because, in polite circles, the constitutional of the artist is presumed to lie between Bond

\* It will be noticed I am taking it pretty well for granted that good things are incompatible with bad and I think the experience of the last few years proves that the end of war has been lost in the means of waging war. The Crusades were really a war for an idea. But war itself is so inherently demoralising that a genuine war for a genuine idea becomes impossible, as the means of waging war are perfected and extended.

Street and the British Museum, I had better write a short chapter, as a preface to the subject, upon Morris and Cobbett. Possibly, in their likeness, one may be able to trace an analogy between the two branches of my subject.

**O**NLY the actions of the just  
Smell sweet and blossom in their dust. *Shirley*

**G**OD becomes as we are that we may be as he is,  
For everything that lives is Holy. *Blake*

**L**OOK here, upon this picture, and on this;  
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.  
See what a grace was seated on this brow;  
Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself,  
An eye like Mars, to threaten and command,  
A station like the herald Mercury  
New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill,  
A combination and a form indeed,  
Where every god did seem to set his seal  
To give the world assurance of a man. *Hamlet*

**I**SAY that our work lies quite outside Parliament, and it is to help to educate the people by every and any means that may be effective; and the knowledge we have to help them to is three-fold—to know their own, to know how to take their own and to know how to use their own. *William Morris*

**I**T is the natural effect of enlightening the mind to change the character. *William Cobbett*

**T**HEN war comes upon the scene and in six months all the results of twenty years of patient labour and of human genius are gone for ever. *Maupassant*

## TWO SABBATH-BREAKERS

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N nights so pitchy that the darkness can almost be felt and handled, as though it were some kind of gelatinous substance, a walker in the country may see a few patches of light from cottages and farms colouring and edging Cimmeria and at once relieving and intensifying its shades. Perhaps these farms and cottages, glancing so cheerfully, are old, and I remember that this month (March) sees the celebration of the William Morris week and the anniversary of William Cobbett's birthday. Beyond the identity of Christian names and souls, it is, on the face of it, fantastic to compare them. There is something so solitary, mountainous and prophetic about Morris\* that it seems as idle to pair him with anyone as it would be Isaiah—"Corruption," he wrote, with the leonine combativeness, and unquenchable (not to say brow-beating) honesty of purpose which make his personality so endearing, "is digging a terrible pit of perdition for society from which, in-

\* In this chapter I am not, of course, discussing Morris specifically ■ designer, craftsman, poet, story-teller, pastoral romancer, saga-writer, translator, scholar, archæologist, typographer, Protector of Ancient Buildings (like Cnut, forbidding the encroachment of the waves) or "mediævalist," as he is falsely called—but only the public application of all this marvellous fertility to social life. Morris' work is all of ■ piece and his actual literary production was an essential background to his social convictions. He may not have created many masterpieces (even his handicraft work), but they all contributed to the masterpiece of his life.

deed, the new birth may come, but surely from amidst of terror, violence and misery." What are you up to, Siegfried volleyed from his flaming hill of warning—"on one side ruinous and wearisome waste leading through corruption to corruption on to complete cynicism at last, and the disintegration of all Society; and on the other side implacable oppression, destructive of all pleasure and hope in life, and leading—whitherwards?" His constant preoccupation with this prophecy is full of interest, and it occurs a score of times in his letters, addresses and conversation. A letter written in 1885, sometime after the formation of the Socialist League and the split with the Social Democratic Federation, says:—"I have more faith than a grain of mustard seed in the future history of civilisation, which I *know* now is doomed to destruction, and probably before very long: what a joy it is to think of and how often it consoles me to think of. . . . real feelings and passions, however rudimentary, taking the place of our wretched hypocrisies. With this thought in my mind all the history of the past is lighted up and lives again to me. I used really to despair once, because I thought what the idiots of our day call progress would go on perfecting itself; happily, I know now that all that will have a sudden check—sudden in appearance I mean—'as it was in the days of Noë.' " He likewise anticipated the coming of a more or less officially recognised State Socialism to precede a fuller enlightenment. But

all his forecasts were uttered from the vantage of the poet's and prophet's creative imagination. Paradoxical as it may seem for a practical craftsman, a writer who flouted "inspiration," and a man strongly coloured with Johnsonian good sense, Morris saw and dreamed in the way that Blake and Shelley did. His is a psychology by no means simple, so strangely blended in him were a keen intelligence and imaginative wisdom.

Yet further: because he was a seer, Morris, through all his vehemence (not in spite of it) was essentially a moderate man. Pathos sweetens and beams upon all his Socialist activities. A forbearance, sanity, humility (for such a man!) and good nature guided him in his dealings with the Federation and the League, whose futilities, extravagance and empty violence so sorely tried him. He approved neither of palliation nor of rioting; he broke with the Hyndmanites for their crudeness, bluster and intrigue, and his position some years before his death was that of a *passive*, mellow Socialism, which saw life as it saw art organically, as a growth, as a spiritual redemption, as "the spontaneous expression of the pleasure of life innate in the whole people." War and violence, whether of commerce or its victims, were hateful to the aspiration of that rich and generous soul so free of cant, pretentiousness and pomposity, that it could not be deceived by them. He knew that the anarchy of commerce had to be replaced by a spirit of love and art, insepar-

ables, and its only true and unconquerable foes. A shallow, journalistic reading picks out his more controversial words uttered in the heat of conflict, but anybody who studies Professor Mackail's wise appreciation of him must come to some such conclusion. The retribution to fall upon society was, he knew, of society's own preparing; the logical consequence of its denial of God.

So the prophet spake, thus the whirlwind has been reaped. But it was the peculiar nature and fate of Morris's gospel that made him like a star that dwelt apart—a great deal further than most controversialists, further than many practical visionaries. Society has failed to realise the saving distinction he drew between false riches and true wealth (even old Butler who stuck up for money, and in his hatred for dogmas and passion for common-sense, sometimes made one of the other, felt what was wrong with money—the love and the want of it). But so have the Socialists. Sterile, without the impulse of art, they have frittered away the end of his religion in the means.\* Ruskin, it is true,

\* Is it necessary to define what that religion was? Surely not, and even if so, my future chapters will show plainly enough what a debt this book owes to it. I will be content myself with an extract or two from his own less familiar correspondence. The following is from a letter to Mrs. Howard:—"I think this blindness to beauty will draw down a kind of revenge one day—who knows? Years ago men's minds were full of art and the dignified shows of life and they had but little time for justice and peace; and the vengeance on them was not increase of the violence they did not heed, but the destruction of the art they heeded. So perhaps the gods are preparing troubles and terrors for the world; that it may once again (or our small corner of it) become beautiful; for I do not believe they will have it dull and ugly for ever." Secondly, an extract out of his

is usually coupled with Morris, but then Ruskin, except for his admirable insight into political economy, was a grandiose old woman who was always laying down the wrong law. A pound of Ruskin's "gorgeous eloquence" is not worth an ounce of Morris's Saxon mother wit. We feel, therefore towards Morris, in the spirit of Wordsworth's sonnet to Milton.

But what of Cobbett—the Samson of "Reform?" That stalwart looks a little earthy and ephemeral beside Morris. Except in the natural freshness, purity and even elegance of his style and its extraordinary ratiocinative power, he was no more of an artist (in the accepted sense) than a turnip. Nowadays, too, we see that Shelley and Blake were profounder politicians, because the boundaries of

very rare criticisms of contemporary work (Swinburne's "Tristram of Lyonesse") ".... but in these days when all the arts, even poetry, are like to be overwhelmed under the mass of material riches which civilisation has made and is making more and more hastily every day; riches which the world has made, indeed, but cannot use to any good purpose: in these days the issue between art, that is the godlike part of man, and mere bestiality is so momentous and the surroundings of life are so stern and unplayful that nothing can take serious hold of people or should do so, but that which is rooted deepest in reality . . . there is no room for anything which is not forced out of a man of deep feeling, because of its innate strength and vision." Lastly, a small piece out of his noble letter to the *Daily Chronicle* on the Miners' question:—"I do not believe in the possibility of keeping art vigorously alive by the action, however energetic, of a few groups of specially gifted men and their small circle of admirers amidst a general public incapable of understanding and enjoying their work. I hold firmly to the opinion that all worthy schools of art must be in the future, as they have been in the past, the outcome of the aspiration of the people towards the beauty and true pleasure of life. And further—these aspirations of the people towards beauty can only be born from a condition of practical equality of economic condition amongst the whole population. .... This, I say, is the art which I look forward to, not as a vague dream, but ■■■ practical certainty, founded on the general well-being of the people."

Cobbett's crusades lay pretty well within a single generation:—

“But vain the sword and vain the bow,  
They never can win war's overthrow;  
The hermit's prayer and the widow's tear  
Alone can free the world from fear.

“For the tear is an intellectual thing,  
And the sigh is the sword of an angel king;  
And the bitter groan of a martyr's woe  
Is an arrow from the Almighty's bow.”

The statecraft of “The Masque of Anarchy” and “Auguries of Innocence” was far beyond Cobbett's apprehension. He was in fact half a Tory Constitutional, with all the obvious and quite likeable prejudices, the honest hatred of vulgar innovation, of “the place-and-pension-hunting-crew,” of peculators and stock-jobbers, of pluralism, “of grasping tyrannical faction” attaching to that extinct creed. “The Whigs,” he said, “are the Rehoboam of England; the Tories rule us with rods, but the Whigs scourge us with scorpions.” And again:—“They (the Whigs) always tried to make tyranny double tyranny; they were always the most severe, the most grasping, the most greedy, the most tyrannical faction whose proceedings are recorded in history.” The other half of him was rooted like an old rock, in the soil, making him not only so passionate a champion of the pauperised agricultural labourer, but as he

himself claimed with pardonable vanity, "the great enlightener of the people of England."

But beneath the faces and in the expressions of our heroes, likenesses rise up like trout after flies. There is a primary likeness in their very tone—a tone of disgusted repudiation, combined with threats that are rather entreaties and entreaties that are rather threats. It is a tone both of withdrawing and of plunging in, of deserting the *vis inertiae* which is the real enemy and at the same time giving its hide, encrusted with barnacles, a good sound drubbing. Morris has the advantage over Cobbett here. His artistry gave him the whole social landscape, which the seriousness and simplicity of his character saw, felt and knew as piercingly as they knew the arts; Cobbett only encompassed the little property by the homestead. The real difference between them is not merely that the one saw revolution (a revolution, through art, of spirit, and of peace) and revolution alone as the prelude to the "great change" and the other less articulately; not only that Cobbett saw life socially, but Morris creatively. Morris had a philosophy of life and Cobbett, but one of (to put the matter in a deceptively harsh light, for want of a better word) expediency. Cobbett, so to speak, twisted the bull's tail, but Morris had it by the horns.

Granted this distinction, radical enough, but not destructive, they can run in harness together. Both were headstrong and impetuous in disposi-

tion; both were extremely good haters, abominating the one political, the other commercial corruption with the same hearty, militant zeal. Both of them were born fighters, and the same kinds of characteristic excellencies appear, curiously enough, in their respective styles. They match each other in their forthrightness, in their vast productiveness and capacity for work, in the doggedness of their convictions and, indeed, in a way of beating people over the head with them, as they no doubt deserved. Cobbett's career, it is true, is strewn with inconsistencies; on page 10 of his mental biography, he is in full cry with his contemporaries, hounding Tom Paine as a monster, an apostate, an infidel, a rogue and an outcast, and on page 100 piously hawking his bones. He was first a "patriot," then a pacifist. What Cobbett was really doing was shedding exuberances. The dog was hunting his rat. Besides, a quite consistent—that is to say a perfectly logical—man is one who must reduce life to the absurd and himself to a madhouse. If Cobbett was inconsistent, he was coherent enough. Morris, too, like Cobbett, had that mystical attachment to the land which lends both of them something of their enchantment. "Less lucky than Midas," says Morris, "our green fields and clear waters, nay, the very air we breathe are turned not to gold, but to dirt." He follows in his fine tempestuous way—"Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die, *choked by filth*." Cobbett's devotion

to the land of his fathers, quite apart from his references to the "great wen," his papers on plantations, etc., and his little estate at Botley, is sufficiently attested by the way he was attacked as an incendiary of barns and hayricks by a Press half as poisonous as ours to-day.

But besides their fearlessness, their magnificent public spirit (Cobbett's loathing of jobbery was Morris's of charlatanism and shoddiness) and their very reprehensible attitude to the House of Commons (in "News from Nowhere" is it not a barn for the storage of manure?)—while Cobbett, on his first appearance as member for Oldham, planted himself on the front bench and remarked:—"It appears to me that since I have been sitting here, I have heard a great deal of vain and unprofitable conversation"—they both had a veneration for the worth and value of labour which makes them brethren—Dioscuri of a dawn that has not yet come. Both addressed their audiences as working men. "I have pleaded the cause of the working people, and I shall see that cause triumph," and Morris professedly repudiated the middle classes. Both of them were in this respect traditionalists, for Cobbett looked back to the more independent labourer of his childhood ("I want nothing new," he always said), and Morris far back to the towns-folk of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, who built the cathedrals of England and North France.

But they met here upon even closer ground. Morris, as well as Cobbett, was a bit of a feudalist—or at least agreed with Cobbett in the health and sanity of a more personal and intimate relationship between employer and employed. It is interesting to find him advocating the common hall “in the rational ancient way which was used from the time of Homer to past the time of Chaucer, a big hall to wit, with a few chambers tacked on to it for sleeping or sulking in,” in almost the same language as Cobbett. Modern finance is impersonal and remote from the human consequences of its designs. Cobbett, too, stood apart—“I am the watchman, the man on the tower, who can neither be coaxed, nor wheedled, nor bullied.”

A special point remains to be made of the attitude of men like Cobbett and Morris to tradition. Morris's teaching could not exist without it, and quite refutes the accepted verdict that tradition and revolution are in hostile camps. Cut the former out of him and Shylock is once more discomfited. The traditions of a thousand years, he says, fall before competitive commerce in a month. Profiteering he called by the mediæval terms of usury, “regrating” and “forestalling”—(*viz.*, buying for 2d. what you sell for  $2\frac{1}{2}$ d.). He describes the struggle between commerce (with which popular liberties were first associated) and sham feudalism, and shows how the conqueror turned on his allies. The history of the Dutch Republic (as he might

have pointed out) which once free of the Spanish despotism, diverted and etiolated its energies into a series of commercial wars for the trade of the Indies, is a comment in little upon the progress of civilisation. He declares that work is no good to a man, unless memory and imagination accompany it, and he can create, not only as an individual, but a particle of the human race, that obscure congeries of the "common people" to whom kings, prelates and patrons owe the glory of their dwellings and their household appointments. How comes it, he asks, that these works that have survived are full of joy and vitality, when open violence and oppression were the lot of their makers? They were absorbed, in spite of all, in the excellence of what they made. If we do not study ancient art, he warns his audiences, we shall be influenced by the feeble work around us and shall only copy the better through the copyists. For the memory of that ancient art will determine us to bear no longer the reckless brutality and squalor of to-day. A laborious study of the workmanship and design of the old peasant-craftsmen is in itself a prelude to the awakening. Follow Nature, study antiquity, make your own art—this was Morris's triad. Cobbett's grim suspicion of the beginnings of plutocratic Whiggery comes to almost, though not quite, the same thing.

Their true piety for the past was indeed founded on a perception that the commercial system thrust a

crude wedge into the continuity of man's development into ever higher and higher forms of interpreting life. War, in which the spoils of time and the labour of generations are overthrown in ten minutes' firing, is the endorsement, signed in blood of this challenge. Modern rulers have a kind of inevitable grudge against the historic building. It was natural for the German military to destroy Rheims and Louvain and Amiens, as it was for the London School Board to propose the demolition of old and beautiful houses to make Board Schools—as it is for our age to treat art as a luxurious divan to be leaped from when Sergeant Action blows his whistle. The health and sanity of the works of the past impeach and warn the present (because they are an alternative) that Moloch's temple, built of the bones of human love and happiness, shall one day be overthrown.

I have one more parallel to make. Morris and Cobbett were what the fashion of a few years back would have called "vitalists." Vitalism can cover a multitude of sins, but the term may, perhaps, be applied, if it means that our heroes devoted themselves to parting the decoration from the expression of life. Morris especially loved art, because he saw in it the expression of simple and valid human needs. Everything beyond and outside those needs was a decorative superfluity. Cobbett, too, sought all his life how to translate humanity into the quick and active element of life. Humanity is the am-

bassador of God, just as shadows, responding in their depth and movement to the relationship of sun and cloud—to the author of their being—are the expression of Nature's countenance. It was the business of Morris and Cobbett to expose the decorative in life and to show that, though a vague and insubstantial thing because it is remote from human needs, at the same time it can and does work fearful, tangible havoc.

In fact, they would have disliked the æsthete. It seems antiquarian to mention them in these days of direct action;—who crawl but in the Black and Yellow Books, of which the first is unobtainable by the most covetous of collectors and the latter languishes, like the inland pebbles left dry and purposeless by some remote geological offensive, upon the shelves of the Charing Cross Road. Æstheticism is, indeed, aged, but, like eld, has borrowed the image of youth. The military gentlemen, for instance, whose conception of warfare is that of technical contrivance and design, and who do not see flesh and blood in flanks and salients; the business man who plays with his stocks and shares, serenely detached from any real work that is done in the world; the politician who feeds on the liver of humanity, not out of a sense of duty to some Jovian decree, but for a dietary, as a gourmet, one might say—who regards politics much as an elegant woman regards an expensive hat, as an exercise of power and display of personality; the

first-class passengers, troubled by no idle superstition, who used to, and may still, catch the albatross (if there are any left) with hook and line on shipboard—all, all of them, are æsthetes. The characteristic of the æsthete, that is to say, is frivolity; he is cut off from the concrete reality of life on the one hand and the idea, the spirit of life on the other. Morris and Cobbett might, therefore, be called “vitalists,” because they realised that just as spiritual love manifests itself through physical desire, so the spirit of life finds expression through the concrete forms of life.

Nor is it necessary to point out that these men who fought so valiantly “for the good of men’s souls” were hostile in grain to that theory of external authority, which, like a cat chasing its own tail, can express nothing but its own delusive egoism.

They are gone and it is well for them, for Morris would have burst had he seen his prophecy come to pass and his workmen making the instruments of death instead of life and beauty, and Cobbett would have burst had he seen the multitudes of placemen and jobbers, the deluge of paper-money, the starvation of the land and the Alps of National Debt. Our cottage lights are really stars, and we who sit in the valley of lamentation may at least look up and see their good works and their lights so shining before men that it may give us courage to glorify something very different from what we do.

The comparison is, after all, relevant to our times, and this book. Cobbett may, in his way, stand as a respecter of persons (not quite in the Scriptural sense), Morris as a respecter of things, and the approximations and parallels of their lives and works will do for an example of the interaction and interpenetration of things with people and people with things. Through them we see, too, that political in the end accompanies commercial corruption—a lesson to be learned, since we English used to be jealous of our political rights, while ignoring the complement of commercial ones. Cobbett again *was* really an artist, since consciously or not he felt self-government to be equal, contributory and harmonious in all its parts, both as a comely form and as proceeding from the common need; and we have consequently to extend the meaning of art into an Empire. Lastly, the impossible conception of Cobbett and Morris, as men, as workers, and as representatives of ideas living and working in our present pass, breathing in this foul air, may give the measure of our age better, perhaps, than any number of Jobads and Jermiads.



**I**T is admitted that the presence of people who refuse to enter in the great handicap race for sixpenny pieces, is at once an insult and a disenchantment for those who do. . . . Alexander is touched in a very delicate place by the disregard of Diogenes.

*R. L. Stevenson*

**T**HREE is one thing in the world more wicked than the desire to command, and that is the will to obey.

*W. K. Clifford*

**C**OMMAND is a blight to the affections; love and coercion cannot possibly exist together.

*Herbert Spenser*

**F**OR what is my life or any man's life but a conflict with foes:—

The old, the incessant war?

*Walt Whitman*

**I**T is hard to think that man could ever have become man at all, but for the gradual evolution of a perception that though the world looms so large when we are in it, it may seem a little thing when we have got away from it.

*Samuel Butler*

**T**HERE rises an unspeakable desire  
After the knowledge of our buried life;  
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force  
In tracking out our true, original course;  
A longing to enquire  
Into the mystery of this heart which beats  
So wild, so deep in us—to know  
Whence our lives come and whence they go.

*Matthew Arnold*

**I**N all Love, there is some Producer, some Means and some End; all these being internal in the thing itself.

*Thomas Traherne*

**S**HAKE off your heavy trance!  
And leap into a dance  
Such as no mortals use to tread;  
Fit only for Apollo  
To play to, for the moon to lead,  
And all the stars to follow.

*Francis Beaumont*

**G**OD has made out of his abundance a separate wisdom  
for everything that lives. *Old Celtic Saying*

## A TYPE OF THE CHOSEN

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PEOPLE and things, then—true, if disguised human nature and the nature of things—are united in cause and principle against any arbitrary system which imposes, and is imposed, upon them from without. The remedy, therefore, has to come through the exercise and association of these two sovereign elements of life. There are historians who debate the separation of Church and State, of kingdom from kingdom, of England from Germany, what have they to say to the separation of art from humanity? The Horatian ideal, that of the vulgar æsthete and the ideal of Cleon the artistic vulgarian are, in their “democratic” and anti-democratic aspects the principal themes for the orthodox historian.

Are there to be found, then, any broad general principles which can be applied to art, and by their comprehension give us a notion of what human progress means? I believe that there are, and that they can be set down without undue recourse to the vested interests of æsthetic idiom. In a word, we have to look at art, as we have been looking at the human being from the foundation upwards. For the task of art is to find “the line of least resistance”\*

\* By the “line of least resistance,” I do not, of course, mean a *laissez faire* policy. I — using it in the — of the line that does least violence to the materials.

between the substance in which it works and the Form in which it seeks to emerge. The same can be said of the individual. His motive for living is to express himself in terms of life. To make his life a work of art, he, too, has ("oh, what labour, oh, what pain!") to find the line of least resistance and to mould himself upon the nature of the human material, as art does upon the nature of its material. He has to find the most adaptable means of communication between his less conscious self (the substance, the material) and the self that is to come into its own. "It is our less conscious thoughts. . . . which mainly mould our lives," writes William James. The identification of those two selves is the veritable law of God.

The artist himself performs a kind of double function. In attempting to identify the substance with the Form of his material, to entice out its essence, he has also to identify the substance of his own nature with its own Form. He sees, that is to say, in the materials of the universe, of man and of his craft, the spirit that fragmentarily is in himself. If he be true to the one consciousness, he will be true to the other. Precisely the same applies to society, of which the individual is the substance, just as stone is the substance of a statue and pigment of a picture, of which the Form is the unified, developed life, indivisible from the substance and yet not of it. Translated into social terms, the substance is the individual and only by giving structure and

harmony to the growth of every individual can a society gather up its heterogeneous material into a compact reality—into Form—into an image of God. A society that ignores or exploits the individual is like a painter who either tries to get on without paint at all, or forces it into a foreign relation—something alien to the nature of itself.

On these grounds one of the cardinal sins in art, as in humanity, is to disobey those materials—to compel those materials to conform to the special qualities of other materials; to mix the expression of paint, say, with the proper materials of stone, to pervert the human material in the terms of machinery, wealth and compulsion. To impose arbitrary designs upon materials is to deprive them of their essential reality. The process of art forms an exact parallel with that of human relations and personality. Both are the well-beloved children of God, and both seek to express themselves in the due Form of their material. So that to be “true to Nature” is to be true to Nature’s materials. “How admirable thy justice, O thou first Mover! Thou hast not willed that any power should lack the processes and qualities necessary for its results.” Ingenious forms in art interpose themselves between its materials and their expression—corresponding forms interpose *themselves* between the human material and its expression. Pedantry in art is the same thing as tyranny in life. For ultimately Form is the “I AM” of the universe, and God, the com-

Eduard  
Art  
Nature

plete expression, the perfect creation, while the surest proof of the existence of God is the proof both visible and felt of his materials. The law of materials, the promise of the law of God, governs all men and all things.

The homeliest illustration will serve. Morris points out that in a fireplace the wood should be part of the wall and the tiles of the chimney. The craftsman's business lies in expressing those respective relationships. The art of the novelist will serve as another example. What we have to watch in a good novel is not the plot, which is not an absolute value in itself, nor, again the personality of the novelist, which will only emerge full-bodied if the other values are in due relation, but the balance of the relationship between the material working itself out and the attitude of the writer. We have to feel that there is idea and conviction in the novelist's mind, and that at the same time they do not upset and interfere with the natural development of the material out of its own innate resources and significance. The material would not duly evolve itself unless the grasp and perception of the novelist realise its capabilities, and he or she again would not convey the true sense of that perception to us if he (or she) were to take liberties with the material.

Or, to take an example right away from art—performing animals. Elephants sitting on benches, blowing trumpets, seals tossing and catching balls, tigers leaping through hoops, bears at afternoon

tea—all those mongrel and outlandish antics that turn an animal away from the norm of his own kingdom into the fool of another—mutiny against the materials. Far better for a tiger to spring in his superb beauty upon his prey than upon an inverted tub. No wonder that that sensitive writer Desmond MacCarthy speaks of the “heart-damping gambols of performing animals.” It may be objected that dogs ought not to sit up and beg. Nonsense—dogs are domesticated and enjoy their own little variety shows. But a dog which apes man and rides a bicycle is a monstrosity. The natural dignity of art is outraged and debased by clowning him into a Little Boy Blue. He is being forced “to imitate in one substance the Form of another.” He is true neither to himself nor to Little Boy Blue.\* In the same way, whoever takes pleasure in the song of a lark or a blinded chaffinch in a cage, is, willy nilly, an apostle of art for art’s sake. But the lover of beauty, who is true to the law of materials, can take no pleasure in a bird’s song, unless it be an accompaniment to the natural surroundings in which the bird exists—the fields of blue and green, the woods and waters, hills and valleys. The bird’s song cannot, that is to say, be dissociated from the idea of gladness and freedom. Or, again, take a country house. If it stick to the nature of its wood or stone, if it have the appearance of having grown out of the

\* I do not, of course, mean that animals should not be tamed or domesticated. A horse drawing a plough does not offend our sense of harmony or fitness, but dancing on two legs to a silly tune, he does and should offend it.

earth and the particular character and atmosphere of the district in which it is built (as even the ugliest houses look, if they have a matured and amber-coloured thatch head on them or have grown old enough to take Nature's brush) and at the same time be fitly accommodated to the wants of man, that house has done its duty by the law of materials. When we consider the threefold relation of a house to the earth, to man and to the materials of its own structure, we recognise how right was Morris in insisting upon the primary importance of architecture. Or again. To plant cactuses in English gardens is to mix up different forms and materials. Garden flowers should be natural products of a garden, they should be true to the idea of a garden, not of the tropics or a florist's shop. Or to take a penultimate example: an egret's plume should be in an egret's tail, not in a female barbarian's hat.

I will take one last example—also from the birds. It may appear that I am always dragging in birds by the beak. But it seems to me that birds play an exceedingly important part in the spiritual economy both of man and of Nature. They are the most beautiful objects in Nature; our attitude towards them is a test of our relations with Nature, and though science has a vested interest in them, it is to psychology and philosophy that they more truly and naturally belong. Jules Michelet, in "L'Oiseau," saw birds not in species and orders, but as souls and persons. They are, too, a kind of

chorus to the argument of this book. Well, then, museums all over the world (I am leaving out of account the private collector—a base creature outside the pale of discussion) are full of stuffed birds in glass cases, principally for purposes of identification. To me, there is hardly a spectacle more depressing than row upon row of these specimens, with their faded plumage, their glass eyes and rigid, lifeless, meaningless poses. They are a dull parody upon the quick and living being. But are they indispensable for the purposes of study? Nothing of the kind. Instead of these travesties and violations of life, why are there not painted models of all the species, wrought in materials suitable to the representation desired—porcelain or wax for instance? Consider the advantages of this method. In the first place, the cost of life would be practically nil—an immeasurable gain. Secondly, the poise and shape of the figures would be more just and comely. Thirdly, the colours would retain their gloss and brilliance. Fourthly, these figures would be beautiful in themselves, since they would be executed, not by scientists, but by competent artists. Nobody in their senses could call a stuffed bird beautiful. Fifthly, this beauty would be *their own*, and not a borrowing from, an imitation of the beauty of the bird. A bird is beautiful in itself, ■ figure of a bird should be beautiful in itself; both are works of art. But a stuffed bird is neither art nor Nature; it violates the nature of things. Sixthly,

the model would also serve a scientific purpose more accurately than the bastard art of taxidermy which can only retain the shape, and that clumsily, can ever do. Lastly, there is the gain for humanity, through our refusal to abuse our power over the creatures (since if we abuse them, we shall abuse one another) and in the more sympathetic understanding of bird-life (that is to say, of the nature of things) which such modelling would entail. There, simply by obeying the law of materials in one particular branch of knowledge, we should achieve a definite gain in life, beauty and humanity—considerations against which all others are pedantry. Shakespeare put the whole thing into one line—“Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.”

So we can travel from the smaller to the greater substances and the final object of art as of human nature is to scale the invisible ladders of heaven, with passion, humility and delight, by steps that lead up from dust and clay to perfect Form. Humanity and art are what Shelley calls “nurslings of immortality.” Perhaps here is a possible interpretation of the mysterious Sin against the Holy Ghost. It is a violation of the very nature of things.

Now this view of art (which, of course, is not my invention) is opposed in grain to the mimetic art of “accurate representation,” which, through its literary medium, is called “realism,” or, to use a narrower term, “naturalism.” The latter is contrary to the view set forth (scrappily, but I shall try

to follow it in a continuous thread through the rest of the book) in four different ways. In the first place, it sacrifices end to means by concentrating upon technique and draughtsmanship as ends in themselves. Secondly, the emphasis upon "likeness" diverts the attention of the artist from the material to the subject. He is imitating the external appearance of Nature, not being true to: he spirit of Nature in his material. Photography can do that a great deal more accurately than he can and far more satisfactorily, since, by taking photographs, photography is being true to the nature of its being. Thirdly, accurate representation confuses forms with Form. Form is true to the idea, which can only be expressed appropriately by insight into the nature of the materials that are to reveal that idea. In the art of transferring to canvas or paper the Form of something totally different, forms replace Form and the letter the spirit. Nature may have been successfully imitated, but the nature of things has been violated. Fourthly, it destroys the value of art altogether, just because art is not Nature. Turn Nature over to art and art slips into the wings and you are clasping only a pallid imitation of Nature. Ixion embraces the cloud-shape and accepts it complacently as Hera. Art can no more be called either superior or inferior to Nature than crocuses can be called superior or inferior to sweet-williams. They are different and each is beautiful and fit in itself. It is of no small

significance that the artists of a commercialised and imperialised Japan should preach that "without the depiction of objects there can be no pictorial art." Hence Japanese art has deteriorated into empty decoration. Some of the old Chinese poets and artificers made no such artistic mistake or concession.

If, therefore, we get the bearings of this law and steer by it into other waters, displacement rather than force, becomes the proper revolutionary term. A material victory is often the complement of spiritual defeat. If man thirsts for a better order than the present one, he must seek it in himself, draw what he finds there into the light of day, and embody it in the art of living, of which the work of art, both in process and achievement, is the microcosm. The way to solve the problem is by getting rid of that which interposes itself between what may be called the good nature of men (it must be good, because it is the raw material of the infinite and perfectible) and the direction, energy and satisfaction of that nature. How, then, is it possible to get men's true wants clear of the perversions and frustrations owed to our civilisation?

Is it possible, for instance, to build a kind of spiritual clearing-house for those wants, so that people may be able, if they choose, to perceive what is uncongenial to their growth and happiness, by the example, by the alternative of what is congenial to them; that they may be able to distinguish more

clearly between what they do want and what they don't? It may be hedonism, or too obstinate a faith in the spiritual good sense of man, but it is not mere wild speculation to believe that if he could develop this sense of choice and then differentiate the result from mere appetite, morality might be pretty much left to take care of itself. Under the pressure of illusion or under the delusions of force, men and women will consent to be miserable and ignorant and prejudiced and—because ignorant and prejudiced—cruel. But they will not consent to be moral either by force or deceit. Therein is their hope. Mankind will not be happy unless moral, nor moral unless happy, and the quality of man's happiness and morality depends upon the strength and desire with which he apprehends reality—the Form of his individual substance.

Reality, in spite of the materialists, is twofold. In this world, it means perceiving people and things literally as what they are, and metaphysically as what they imply. In the invisible world, the millennial world, the world of dreams, by whose contact with our own we divine that perfect love, order and beauty are *not* a dream, it consists in knowing that people and things are in an ancestral, a continuous and symbolic relation with infinite truth. We cannot, as Francis Thompson puts it, "touch a flower without troubling of a star." Instinct, in fact, is the criterion of faith in the unseen. These realities, those of the concrete and the abstract, the

individual and the universal, are so to be judged, the one by the touchstone of the other, that if we lose our sense of the one, we sacrifice our perception of the other. Mr. Francis Meynell, in his beautiful little anthology of Vaughan and Marvell, puts upon his title page: — “The Best of Both Worlds—Poems of Spirit and of Sense.” Keats’s famous line: — “She stood in tears amid the alien corn,” contains no fewer than four clear particulars, four concrete and definite statements, as differentiated from one another as it is possible for a sentence of eight words to effect. Yet, by some alchemy of language, these four plain observations have combined to pass out of sense into spirit, out of the particular into the eternal. I think it would be true to say that all the great mystics teach this truth — that people and things are both a truth in themselves and a portion of Truth. It is the mystifiers who drown the concrete in the abstract, the idolaters who ignore the abstract in the concrete, and the æsthetes who ignore both — both the “Word” of life and the “Flesh” that it is made.

Can the artist then (as champion of a new society) be used both as a convenient example to people of the faith they might have in themselves, and as an explorer of reality? Caution steps in here, for it is no easy matter to keep even the best of men’s heads clear of the prevailing notion of the artist as the **Man in the Deck Chair**, while men are working and women weeping. But if it is hard to materialise

him as a type, it will do for the moment to take him on trust as a symbol. Forget for that moment all the gibberish about art for art's sake, and art for war's sake and war for art's sake. Forget the pale hands beside the Shalimar. Recollect "the fretfulness, impatience and extreme tension of modern literary life, the many anxieties that paralyse and the feverish craving for applause that perverts so many noble intellects"—but it is not fair to confuse the reactions of a forced environment with original sin.

Rather "conceive him if you can a matter-of-fact young man." The lily-worshipper of the 'nineties is gone, and the exquisite casual with tapering fingers who fashions jewelled phrases about the conventions of bourgeois marriage; gone the half-angel and half-child, the spoiled darling of elderly spinsters and (except in America) the gourmet who devours mistresses like oysters. Novelists begin to treat the artist not as a scapegoat, an enigma or a sensitive plant, but as a real person. Legends still persist of the terrific debaucheries of the early Elizabethan dramatists, Nashe, Greene, Lodge, Peele and their associates. The notable thing about these worthies is not their depravity, but their industry. So with the modern artist. The "genuine article" is usually a serious, hard-working, temperate, unhappy creature, struggling to realise his artistic conscience against the overwhelming odds imposed upon him by the outside world.

He is, in short, a person more likely than his less conscious fellows to be out of tune, by the nature and character of his work, with the processes and the results of modern shams. Without encroaching too freely upon a future chapter about art, one may say that he has to bring truth of imagination to bear upon the facts of actual life. Art, as Browning says, in "Fifine at the Fair":—

"Art,

Which I may style the love of loving, rage  
Of knowing, seeing, feeling the absolute truth of  
things

For truth's sake, whole and sole. . . ."

Grotius, who spoke of the "law of Christian piety," really meant that where these facts collide with an apprehension more acute and clairvoyant, the former must go. The artist, because he distinguishes between the appearances and the truth, is the advocate of reality. There is a charming passage in Motley's "Dutch Republic" which will, perhaps, give a notion of what I am after: "Women, children, old men were killed in countless numbers and still through all this havoc, directly over the heads of the struggling throng, suspended in mid-air above the din and smoke of the conflict, there sounded every half-quarter of an hour, as if in gentle mockery, the tender and melodious chimes." The artist is at the other end of the bell-rope.

He can then, to some extent, prevent truth from being as confounded as it now is with illusion, and

to that object his life is dedicated. Yet it is idle to speak him deliverer, before he can deliver himself. As it did the old knights, a purifying ceremony awaits him—an initiation into a new freedom. Within that being exist the longing to be free and the passion to make; outside it and in the disorders of our time, the will, however half-hearted and clumsy, to enslave and the instinct to destroy.

Faith in Truth, in himself and his art and in the need of that art to restore happiness and the will to beauty and lastly, faith in the traditional continuity of that will trampled, but not uprooted by the hoof of material Power, is a working formula. There is, said Butler, "no incontrovertible first premiss," and we have to accept ~~faith~~ or to use the modern term, conviction, as the basis of logic and reason. The artist possessed with this faith looks upon the pride, force and show of modern government, and, a more modest Crusader, finds it infidel.

Assuming that he is so preoccupied, is there anything he can do? Physical force, deliberate conversion, organised opposition, tract mongering, humanitarianism, are all out of his beat. They are making of the line of least resistance a straight, an unbending line, a line with an arrow-head fixed to one end. "The line that is straightest," says Leonardo in his Notebooks, "offers the most resistance." Charles Marriott, most original, delicate, and accomplished of modern art-critics, some-

where describes the artistic process as a "patient waiting upon Form," just as God "brooded over chaos": in fact, "wise passivity" over again.

Theseus, then following the line of least resistance out of the labyrinth, is led by it out into the world; the gardener shifts his attention from the single flower to the garden, and the artist his from the part of his work of art to the whole of mankind? Humanity's interest is his, not only because the idea of humanity is part of his material, but he part of humanity's. The artist also is a man and a brother. But both as artist and brother he will very soon find himself confronted by a state of things favourable to neither. Brotherhood is the polite fiction of the poets; and that process which he has come to recognise as the law of artistic growth has upon the human canvas been violated in the very nature of things. Humanity he perceives as an instrument, not as a substance patiently persuaded into maturity—or rather persuaded to make the effort for itself. Forms (the State, militarism, finance, legalism and all the hankey-pankey) press upon and do violence to the helpless human material. The first law of art, the first law of humanity—that "progress" is from within outwards—are disobeyed under his eyes.

I conclude that on behalf of himself as part of humanity and of humanity as his greater self, his business is to keep clear, desert, retire, withdraw from the concern, as an imposture (using

the word in the double sense of its ordinary and derived meaning) upon the true significance of life and art. By so doing, he will still be "true to himself" and the organic law of art. "Wise passivity" turns to its enemy and stares him out of countenance. It is not quite true to say that this is an extension in terms of art of Tolstoi's gospel of "non-resistance." The artist affirms life, but Tolstoi, too dogmatically, even theologically, intent upon the dualism of body and soul, denied and renounced life. Art and Tolstoi may share some conclusions in common, but they approach them from the opposite poles of thought. When Tolstoi said and applied "the kingdom of God is within you," once more the great truth was loosened. But as he was prodigious in everything, the very hugeness of his intolerance squeezed the kingdom into a province. He was in the right and the wrong, but too ruthless in both. We are flesh and spirit, and mankind will not be freed by keeping them apart. He treated social life, not as an idea, but a pitiless dogma and chained the one by the other.

An example nearer home is presented by Marriott's novel "Now," where a few malcontents drop out, like tired soldiers, from the forced march of civilisation. The idea also emerges, if less transparently, in Henry James's "The Ivory Tower." The striking thing to note is that this attitude is compatible with the whole nature and process of art (a conjunction which is not at all Tolstoian);

next, that it is a means to getting the feel and taste of what I may call undiluted humanity, and lastly, that it is a menace to Power which is finally irresistible. It introduces into the lists the unorthodox combatant who fights not with the weapons selected for him by custom and authority, but with his own. Just as the prestige of duelling would be debased if one of two duellists were to extricate himself, throw down his rapier and walk away, leaving his antagonist dumbfounded, so the prestige of conformity is somehow mystified, embarrassed, unhinged, *Falstaffed* off the stage.

The matter cannot rest here. "Withdrawal" remains a paradox and of no apparent use to humanity or art. It may, of course, mean anything or nothing, and invites a train of misconceptions. The early Christians withdrew; our young poets, some of them have withdrawn; the Pilgrim Fathers did and the Pantisocrats desired to. Cliques, stall-holders in Vanity Fair, the long-haired in the Café Royal, Garden Suburbans, d<sup>o</sup>ns place themselves apart. Every artist, more concerned with doing his work well than with what people will think of him for it—with the work itself rather than the effects produced—to a certain extent already withdraws from society. Satirists and prophets, those thinkers (or rather seers) who can teach humanity a thing or two that takes some learning, detach themselves more consciously. One of the De Guérins withdrew to an island to write works for

his own exclusive delectation. He and the cenobites were the extreme literalists of a reaction common enough in all its forms. The poets retire into their own blossoming solitudes, the spectators of life into their own little observation mounts, Dives into his counting-house and Lazarus his grave, from which it can hardly have been his personal wish to have been raised. The Essenes again, and numberless heretical sects, withdrew from the orthodox Christians, while the Puritans withdrew from the Anglican Church and the Diggers from the Puritans. Individual examples are still more numerous. Montaigne, freeing himself from the epileptic France of Henry III, voyaged the "anatomy" of himself; Leonardo's timeless soul roamed the timeless universe in strange quests and in severe detachment from the human antheap. There are others.\*

A practical difficulty follows. What is likely to be the lot of a party of zealots who set sail for the banks of the Susquehanna? They would probably cause international complications, and perhaps set the whole world by the ears, and it would not be very different on the banks of the Thames or the Seine or the Tiber. Modern European States, shambling in the track of the coarse materialism of the Roman and the out-Romanising German, hardly share the

\* Some months since writing these lines has come a vindication of the argument upon a very large scale. I refer to the "withdrawal" or "retirement" of the entire Labour Party from all contact with the coalesced forces of "vested interests" and political power.

former's quasi-tolerance for personal and intellectual liberty. Economic pressure, newspaper hostility, publicity, and advertisement would soon crumble their lines and ridicule break them up or (worse) bring them too much together. Their very "withdrawal" exposes them to the charge, whether true or false, of slackness, indifference, and egoism.

The dangers of isolation amid an uncongenial world are as patent as those of total retreat. Art must not become the monopoly of an exclusive and cultivated minority (a group-personality) turned in upon itself like the serpent to be seen in the old printers' marks devouring its own tail. But people and things go hand in hand, and people must not be developed at the expense of things or things at the cost of people. Humanity is a work of art in the making, and art itself the thanksgiving of humanity for the gift of life. Art does not despair of humanity, since its object is to separate humanity's perishable from its permanent elements; to contain and express Nature and humanity in an imperishable Form, which the gates of Hell shall not prevail against. The art of an exclusive minority will fail out of sheer dearth of material. It will be reduced to inventing ingenious and insubstantial forms, the frivolity of an hour. Getting too far away from contemporary life has the same demoralising results as getting too close to it. Besides, exclusion is contrary to the purpose of the artistic spirit, which is to impart to others what it has discovered about man

and the universe. The artist who ceases to *testify* to the glory of God shrinks into the æsthetæ.

Another objection would be the over-cultivation of personality, to be discussed in a future chapter. It is good to have an artistic temperament, but it is abominable to use it as a temperament.

Lastly, and I will end the chapter with this objection, there is the attitude which says: "I care no more for all this talk about humanity than I do for politicians' speeches. All I really care about are Nature, books, and a few human beings. The rest is silence." This is the hardest of all to combat, because I have more than a sneaking regard for it.\* But Swift said something of the same thing. There is more affinity between the idea of "that animal, man" and that of "love of mankind" than appears to the casual eye. For there is aspiration for mankind in both.

\* Alas, this regard is only intensified when one considers the appalling reactions which the mad appetite for slaughter is causing in the animal kingdom. For Nature has made no provision to check the destructiveness of man. Her creatures perish at his hands; neither wariness, nor speed, nor cunning, nor protective colouring are of the least avail against the intelligent means man adapts to a destructive end. Man succeeds: he beats Nature; he wounds her to the death in the seat of her first sovereign and quintessential principle—a principle she has spent millions of years in elaborating and perfecting—the conservation and continuity of life. Man cannot, indeed, violate this law with impunity; his destructiveness is, must be and will be visited on his own head. But that is no consolation to Nature for the frustration of her great purpose of "life, more life." There seems to me to be a truly hair-raising blasphemy here, particularly when we consider in how few a number of years (side by side with Nature's æons in the unwinding of her clue) the great tidal wave of life has been dammed. Even if we allow the salvation of man at long last, was Nature prepared to sacrifice the mobile, non-human element of her creation to gain this end? A dark problem.

**L**OOK on, make no sound.    *Conrad*

**N**OTHING is so dangerous to the mind of man as a false absolute and the false absolute of the Germans is Germany. But you cannot guard against a false absolute, whether it be your country, or money, or any kind of worldly success or any pleasures of the flesh except by knowing what are the true absolutes, what are those things which a man ought to desire for their own sake, which, indeed your spirit does actually desire. And, if you know this, you must wish that everyone should have freedom of the spirit.

*Clutton Brock*

**B**UT what is the use of all this minute research (the habits of the beetle *Minotaurus Typhœus*)? I well know that it will not produce a fall in the price of pepper, a rise in that of crates of rotten cabbages, or other serious events of this kind, which cause fleets to be manned and set people face to face intent upon one another's extermination. The insect does not aim at so much glory. It confines itself to showing us life in the inexhaustible variety of its manifestations; it helps us to decipher in some small measure the obscurest book of all—the book of ourselves.    *J. H. Fabre*

**H**E lives detached days;  
He serveth not for praise;  
For gold  
He is not sold.

*Francis Thompson*

## AND HIS MENTAL EXODUS

**T**HE best way to answer these objections is by stating the alternatives to them. The artist (I throw the net as widely as possible) is one at least of the types in modern life who has a regard both for his own welfare and the community's. He has to secure the first in order to forward the second. He can never do either himself or the world any lasting good until, so far as is practicable, he can find out how to extricate himself from the body of society as organised to-day. There is a tale of some ingenious potentate who used to punish an enemy by tying him alive to a corpse—until the union ceased to be an artificial one. The artist cannot altogether cut the cords, because he, like each of us, is a “unit” of society.

But he can withhold himself from the “democracy” in order to join the people. For art is the expression of the whole landscape of created life; not a decoration of the window-pane which looks upon it. We can think of the artist, rather, as a kind of mendicant preacher, without the preaching or the mendicancy—a doctor of souls. He rejects not only the systematised coercion and deceit of plutocracy, but public opinion. I am reminded of the excellent old phrase about being in the world, but not of the world. He has only withdrawn

from the Man in the Street, the Populace, and the idea of it formulated in catchwords, summarised in the Average and embodied in the Press, so that he may penetrate to the dormant bud of being, where it protects itself in its sheath of darkness from the frost that paralyses and the heat that consumes.

When Shakespeare combined pot-boiling with a passing attack of Jingo measles and wrote a schoolboy pantomime, with plenty of masterly and rousing rhetoric in it, called "Henry V," he represents his brigand as wooing the unhappy Princess Catherine "in a soldierly manner": "No, it is not poissible you should love the enemy of France, Kate. But in loving me, you should love the friend of France; for I love France so well, that I will not part with a village of it; I will have it all mine; and Kate, when France is mine and I am yours, then yours is France and you are mine." The artist should love mankind so well that he will work his way to occupying the whole of it.

He has to consider that a country is composed of individuals and that the human being, as distinguished from the herd, the class, the institution is his affair—if we like, his "copy." The importance of the human being is the paramount interest of his art, regardless of the knots of generalities into which that being has tied himself. He thinks of society in the same way. His interest lies in the relation that certain human beings have with other

human beings, and his object (as the object of art) is to encourage the interdependence of those relations in harmony, a poise and balance, in which the particles (the individuals) will all contribute to the whole, without being lost in it and so exploited by the parts masquerading as the whole. His view both of society and the individual, that is to say, is creative. He sees that a society cannot be created unless all the members of it are creating it—that society cannot be a work of art until the individuals that compose it are all working artists. In fact, he comes round—it appears to me inevitably—to Morris and the idea of art as a daily and co-operative function performed by the whole body of citizens both as individuals and social quantities. The greatest poems, he will say, if he is a poet, are those which have never been written.

This, in itself, implies the second point—the artist's dissociation from the existing order. "Passive resistance" is, perhaps, a better term than "withdrawal," and standing aside than either of them, since "passive resistance" has acquired a special and narrow meaning. The artist cannot fight his plutocratic State; the dice and the pistol are always loaded against him. But he can *know* it for the thing it is, and that is the beginning of all things. In whatever order the pieces are set upon the board—whether we call it a duel as to the precedence of prices or values, between making shift or making use of life, between taking what you can

get or getting what you want, between the shoddy or the "genuine article," distinction or the average, free will or determinism, man or the machine—the artist stands on one side, the business man and his State on the other. The quarrel is truly bitter-endian and the prize of victory is the soul of man. "There must be no making friends with the children of Mammon," as Charles Marriott says in one of his novels, and that will do very well for the artist's emblazoned device. Parliament, the State, the Chamber of Commerce, the institutions of the "we're all right" people—as the same writer calls them—appear to him a "barren technique" because they fail to translate into intelligible and active terms the human and creative needs of the people. They fail to speak its language—they spoil a naturally promising voice by vociferation, so to speak. If the people whisper, they shout. Consequently he must have nothing to do with them.

I cannot define what standing aside means. The artist must find things out for himself, and to bind him to a set of negative regulations is to harden the whole concept. The very name of regulation in these days maketh the heart sick. But one may say roughly that he should revive the obsolete term "scruples"; that he should not think too much about his career or (most difficult of all) the leanness of his purse; that he should not invest his money in any of those concerns (armaments is only one of hundreds) which support the interests of

death rather than of life; that he should say to himself, as the name of any prominent Statesman, financier, bishop, general or official, policeman, judge, Pressman, lawyer or ruler occurs to him—"There, but for the grace of God, go I."\*

That he should never allow his children to read the newspapers and never himself believe what he reads in them; that he should perceive officialism behind mob-rule, disorder behind prosperity, vulgar appetites behind long-winded disclaimers of them; that he should connect on the one side and discriminate on the other in all his observation of the official and business world—a catalogue is out of place, a rough draft of one a little arbitrary.

Take, for instance, his attitude to women's suffrage. If, by our cumbrous methods of getting into hot water in order to get out of it, it were necessary for women to receive the vote, as a symbol of their equality with men, then he would accept the fact. But that women should in consequence share with men their exploitations, deceits, and oppressions, he certainly would not.

Lastly, the artist will distinguish between sham art, between art which is exploited as a vested interest and so hands (under the counter) a moral certificate to the existing order and genuine art. Shepherded by an autocratic State, men lose the

\* I suppose one is bound to be harried by the literalists. Let me say here, then, that I think President Wilson to be a practical visionary and I know of no greater title. He truly has expressed the popular substance.

royal power of rejection. The artist who rejects and again rejects is conferring a benefit in the first place upon his art (the artist whose real aim is to make money fails in his art) and, in the second upon society, the greatness of which benefit society, in its present blindness, cannot measure. Forceable opposition either strengthens the existing order by consolidating it or destroys it only to substitute another order founded likewise upon organised force. But simple rejection does more, it undermines the *status quo*. Here, at any rate, is no Cloud-Cuckoo-land scheme of *romantic* rejection; no plan for a settlement in the South Sea Islands. Become different from your enemy; do not, under another name, manifest him in yourselves.

A renunciation of this kind would seem to confound disagreeable duty with personal choice. Putting the matter at its lowest, the pangs of delivery might be more than compensated by the relief. For the pursuit of materialism is rapidly coming to an end from a break-down of the material advantages. The raw materials of force, for instance, are giving out in their expenditure upon material force. Self-interest—so must run this absurd recusancy—demands that self-interest be abandoned. The triumph of the business spirit coincides with the failure of the business policy. Here is where virtue or, as we should call it nowadays, creation gets the measure of vice or destruction. Destruction, by the law of its being, mutinies

in its own camp and sends its loyalists packing into the meagre cohorts of the faithful. Is it not Donne who says "Death, thou shalt die!"?

A very curious chapter in the study of reactions, might, indeed, be written on the theme: Man shall not live by bread alone, for if he does, he shall not have even bread. It would open up the question as to whether the phrase "enlightened self-interest" was justified at all as the criterion of an actual law. I mean as to whether enlightenment and self-interest are not mutually exclusive. No man, for instance, flatly owns to self-interest—or very few. Therefore, nearly all self-interest is enlightened. Perhaps the problem would be narrowed down to a consideration of ultimate and immediate reactions, and it is safe to say that a policy of self-interest, whether it be called "enlightened" or no, is bound in the end to bear both a moral and a material retribution. One of the visible proofs of the interdependence of men, and so one of the strongest arguments for a stable, self-supporting fellowship, is the dreadful fact that a man's self-interest does actually produce a material nemesis upon the persons of his innocent neighbours or descendants. We all share a portion of each other's "sins" and "virtues," now and hereafter. Honesty *is* the best policy, therefore, though that is no argument for pursuing honesty as a policy, since, thus endorsed, it ceases to be honesty. But the immediate reactions of self-interest are sometimes as frequent

as the ultimate ones. The spiritual loss, for instance, has an immediate and powerful effect, since it makes men unhappy. By making them unhappy it causes them, knowingly or not, to despise the material profit of their self-interest.

Take the case of the destruction of birds for the preservation of food crops. Anybody who knows anything about the life-habits of birds is aware that their levies upon fruit and corn, etc., are a minute wage for more than sweated labour in the interest of the farmer and the producer; that, without their services, there would be neither a blade in the corn-fields nor a leaf upon the trees. Therefore, those active workers on behalf of birds for the birds' own sake and for the sake of the joy and tenderness they bring to everybody who is not a clod, very naturally appeal to owners and tenants of land to spare the birds, because it pays to spare them. Spare the bird and spoil the insect, they say. With people of a little *nous*, that, of course, has an effect. But it will not have much. At best, it will cause a respite, an interval here and there, in the process of destruction. For it is the very nature of self-interest to be short-sighted. Spare the bird and spoil the insect will never achieve a crushing victory over spare the bird and spoil the crops. Self-interest thinks in a narrow groove; it cannot take long and complete views because it is walled in, absorbed in trivial pre-occupancies. "There is a bird in my corn; that is good enough for me"—that sentiment is bound

to be pre-eminent, because it illustrates the philosophy of self-interest. Until, that is to say, we voice our enjoyment of birds; until we acknowledge that we have far less right to take their lives than they have to take our cherries; that our cherries are but a mean minimum wage for their songs; and until we realise that they are delicate and aerial intelligences and so worthwhile preserving for their intrinsic beauty and the glad reactions of that beauty upon our perceptions, birds will go on being destroyed and insects multiplying, whether it be to the advantage of our food supply or not.

I am not (to return) suggesting this easy road of desertion to be a good thing. On the contrary, it is a bad thing: not merely because the artistic conscience implies, as it certainly does, a moral conscience. The saint and the true artist differ *not* in their spiritual nature of their respective energies, but in their choice of theme. Religion is, as it were, a specialization of art. Religion appeals directly to God; art may or may not employ various symbols, formulas and euphemisms for the conception of God. All the arts are but different ways of saying God. All the good roads point to Mecca, but they are not the same roads. I mean that the artist has to withdraw not only from the externals of society, but from the philosophy of those externals. In retiring from the commercial and official "Te Deum," he must shake from his feet all that he can of their philosophic dust.

It was suggested in a previous chapter that this philosophy does not consciously accompany the exploits of power and money, although England has been making great strides in propagating it as a definite creed. Defined or not, it is implicit. The artist, therefore, has again to go one better. "A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees," and the artist will not carry through his withdrawal to its full implications unless he can build his house of faith in truth and beauty upon a ground-plan of first principles. He has to examine the meaning of art, the sources of the human emotions and longings, the relation of humanity to God and the strategy by which the image of God is disclosed in stone, in paint, in bronze, in wood, in letters, upon the fair surface of the earth and in the fertile human soil. He will regard his art, not as a profession, but a vocation. The professional artist is superior to the amateur, but he is as inferior to the initiated, the vocational artist. Rupert Brooke, for instance, was a genuine poet, but his was not poetic truth as discovered and revealed by Rupert Brooke, so much as the poetic truth of Rupert Brooke. The artist by vocation is careful not to sacrifice the end to the means. The advantage of the professional artist is that he knows his business; of the artist by vocation that he knows what his business is *for*. Vocational art is at once natural, human and religious. For this reason I made, in the last chapter, some fumbling attempts to discuss the nature of art. Revolution in

the accepted sense is not the artist's business. His is substitution, an attempt to combat human machinery by the weapon of the human spirit.

I call to mind the beautiful passage at the end of that witty and revealing book—"The Revolt of the Angels." Satan has had his dream in which he has conquered the Heavens, and flung Ialdabaoth (God, the God of Power) into the pit and seen him develop those feelings of pity for suffering humanity that he (Satan) had lost in Heaven, but gained in Hell. He awakes and addresses the revolting Archangels:—"God conquered will become Satan; Satan conquering will become God. May the Fates spare me this terrible lot; I love the Hell which formed my genius. I love the Earth where I have done some good, if it be possible to do any good in this fearful world where beings live but by rapine. Now, thanks to us, the god of old is dispossessed of his terrestrial empire and every thinking being on this globe despairs him or knows him not. But what matter that men be no longer submissive to Ialdabaoth if the spirit of Ialdabaoth is still in them; if they like him, are jealous, violent, quarrelsome and greedy, and the foes of the arts and of beauty? What matter that they have rejected the ferocious Demiurge, if they do not hearken to the friendly demons who teach all truths? As to ourselves, celestial spirits, sublime demons, we have destroyed Ialdabaoth, our Tyrant, if in ourselves we have destroyed Ignorance and

Fear.' And Satan, turning to the gardener said:—  
'Nectaire, you fought with me before the birth of  
the world. We were conquered because we failed  
to understand that Victory is a Spirit and it is in  
ourselves and ourselves alone that we must attack  
and destroy Ialdabaoth.'

Therefore, the artist should aim at substituting  
human values for automatic recoil. Cædmon rose  
up from the banquet, from the thunder of the cap-  
tains and the shouting, and in a quiet place laid his  
ear to the Song of Creation, a song that makes no  
sound, because it is compounded of all sounds:—

"There is in God, some say,  
A deep but dazzling darkness . . ."

The question remains of organising this with-  
drawal into a definite society; of founding the  
church in the centre of the congregation. Perhaps  
one is unreasonably afraid of this. The maker of  
things—and the artist is *the maker*—is not a com-  
petent organiser or administrator. He is rather a  
centre of suggestion—his practical policy consists  
in throwing off vibrations like an electron. Theories  
of art are too liable to shibboleths and (worse than  
that) such a society might take itself too solemnly  
and even priggishly. Let organisation arise, if it  
will, of itself and that is another matter. If again,  
its growth were generous, it would admit other  
workers not technically ranked as artists. "Liberty,"  
as Don John of Austria wrote to his master

Philip II, "is a contagious disease which goes on infecting one neighbour after another, if the cure be not promptly applied." In such a society none of our modern divisions and artificial hierarchies would find any place; all men would be its province, for in mankind as in Nature, an instinct exists for free and spontaneous living. But mere theoretic discussion of a potential society is sterile, because it must happen of an idea and impulse moving among men. If that is lacking, it will not be formed.

"I search, but cannot see  
What purpose serves the soul that strives, or world  
it tries

Conclusions with, unless the fruit of victories  
Stay, one and all, stored up and guaranteed its own  
For ever, by some mode whereby shall be made  
known

The gain of every life. Death reads the title clear—  
What each soul for itself conquered from out  
things here,

Since, in the seeing soul, all worth lies, I assert—  
And nought i' the world, which, save for soul that  
sees,

Was, is, and would be ever—stuff for transmuting  
—null

And void until man's breath evoke the beautiful—  
But, touched aright, prompt yields each particle,  
its tongue

Of elemental flame—no matter whence flame  
sprung

From gums or spice, or else from straw and rottenness,  
So long as soul has power to make them burn,  
express  
What lights and warms henceforth, leaves only ash  
behind."

says Browning in "Fifine."

To return once more to the conditions of the artist's "withdrawal" as they concern his own welfare; he will not be able to give up the world for Christ's sake, unless he give it up for his own.\* While he is in the machine he will be exploited by it. He must avoid, therefore, not only the mechanism of modern society, but that society's view of his art. Quite apart from the obvious pressure of advertisement, and the "what the public (that is to say the tradesman) wants," fallacy, there is a kind of hypnosis of closeness which saps the artist's independence. It is as if he drew into his very lungs the floating particles of a foggy atmosphere. Whatever apparent freedom he may have to cultivate his art, is but that of the horse given a loose rein on the road and a wide tether in the fields. He is still the passive instrument of a spurious law of supply and demand, and no less a commodity for purchase than any labourer. Nor has his price to the buyer any ratio to his merit as an artist. His work has no absolute value. Anything—circulation, expense of pro-

\* He cannot give it up for his own unless he learn to laugh as well ■ to frown —both at himself and the rich absurdity of what he is leaving.

duction, subject-matter, the pressure of certain styles and mannerisms, amenability to the vested interest of art, fashionable claims, the "right thing" for the "right people," the whole system of endowment, all take precedence of the simple test of quality. The man who pays the piper will always call the tune.

This fact is partly responsible for the petty but internecine feuds between artists, their childish rivalries and jealousies, the contempt of the successful for the unsuccessful artist and *vice versa*. Art seems nothing but an auction-room in which the artists fiercely compete to sell and to be sold to the highest bidder. Is not all this the effect of commercialism? Artists are the pastime of powerful men; they must fight one another to catch the interest of these men, as sheep driven by the dog struggle who shall first pass the gate. Thus they trample and jostle one another and the dog has his way. Lastly, I will say nothing about "art, made tongue-tied by authority"—a crude fact, sufficient to be recorded and calling for no elaboration.

How cruelly difficult it is for the artist to escape from being a mere sequin upon the social dress! How overwhelming the practical difficulties of detachment! Still, perception is half the battle, and the preservation of the "artistic conscience"—as jealously as may be—a calling up of the reserves.

My intention in this chapter has been to show in broad outline that the nature of art, widely inter-

preted, responds so delicately to the human need that the release of it from the barracks of business and State policy might one day end by drawing after it all the victims of those powers and discharge follow demobilisation. Patently the artist is not the only type who has men's interest at heart. At any rate, an art purged of contact with modern commerce, concerned with the idea of the human being and the things he makes and uses, and discriminating between the true and the false, would be a corner-stone of the *Civitas Dei*.

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LET us depart from hence and fly to our father's delightful land. But by what leading stars shall we direct our flight and by what means avoid the magic power of Circe and the detaining charms of Calypso? But it is in vain that we prepare horses to draw our ships to transport us to our native land. On the contrary, neglecting all these, as unequal to the task, and excluding them entirely from our view, having now closed the corporeal eye, we must stir up and assume a purer eye within, which all men possess, but which is alone used by a few. . . . But if your eye is yet infected with any sordid concern, and not thoroughly refined, while it is on the stretch to behold this most shining spectacle, it will be immediately darkened and incapable of intuition.

*Plotinus*

*Detachment*

## CHRIST AND HIS CHRISTIANS: THE STATE AND ITS POETS

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**B**EFORE leaving "withdrawal" behind, I should give a couple of examples of it in operation and leave the reader to draw the moral.

They are a religious and ancient and a modern and literary one—primitive Christianity as copiously and on the whole fairly observed by Lecky and recent verse.

It is easy to be prejudiced and intolerant about Christianity, still easier to score dialectic points, in the Shaw manner, off it. Christianity, interpreted secularly, undogmatically, and without the ascetic twist which Tolstoi, the Manichæans and Puritans gave it, is as a rule of life, finally inexpugnable. I mean not only that it beats any ethical system you can invent, but that all positive philosophies, æsthetics, and, indeed, politics, really come back to a commentary upon it. What it comes to is that Christianity has ceased to be a monopoly of the theologians. Blake, Shelley, Browning are, in this sense, definitely Christian poets, more so than Tolstoi was a Christian propagandist. We have to deal, however, with Christianity in practice. Nothing, ~~indeed~~, is more remarkable in history

than the contrast between Christianity before and after the third century. That change embraces the whole conflict between a spiritual idea and material power, with Christianity itself taking the successive parts of hero and villain. But the briefest references to the latter rôle need be made, since it is familiar to all.

It populated earth with demons in the name of him whose only demonology and theocracy was that the kingdom of God is within you. It damned those populations of the world who, through ignorance, conviction or indifference, did not agree with its opinions, and in the name of him whose social theories embraced the peace and brotherhood of men:—“A burning, scorching fire,” writes the saintly St. Cyprian, “will for ever torment those who are condemned; there will be no respite or end to their torments. We shall, through eternity, contemplate in their agonies those who for a short time contemplated us in tortures, and for the brief pleasure which the barbarity of our persecutors took in feasting their eyes upon an inhuman spectacle, they will themselves be exposed in an eternal spectacle of agony.”

For the tolerance of its founder, it substituted a hierarchy of ecclesiastical dominion destined to expel freedom of thought from society for many centuries. To proselytise mankind to the cause of the greatest of men who cared not for what men did, but what they were and what they might become in

ever increasing warmth and intensity of life (the teaching of Christ like that of Blake is one of positives, acceptance and affirmatives. "Thou shalt not" had no place in it), It prescribed a regimen of taboos and prohibitions which put a halter on the soul at birth, led it to death and then turned it loose in a paddock of eternal bliss. In its turn it has given place to yet another religion, worse, than anything the most opinionated rationalist could declare of Christianity.

Yet Christianity swallowed the world, taking Neo-Platonism, which could put up a fair spiritual case against its contemporary, in the same mouthful. Was the conqueror armed in the shining armour of material power or the light tunic of a spiritual idea? He "won by weakness," to quote the title of a play I once saw placarded on the walls of a suburban theatre. Material power was simply the spoils of victory. The golden seduction of that figure whose beauty the world, for all its relays of false gods, can never forget, hardly crept through the disfigurements of its Cyprians and Ambroses, but was a sharp sword to the earlier Christians.

For the way the successful offensive was conducted was by holding back, in an isolation from the Roman Empire, complete at any rate up to the days of Marcus Aurelius. Christ himself stood aside; the Christians followed. They took no part in the business of the State ("Nec ulla res aliena magis quam publica," says Tertullian) in social

intercourse with pagans, in Imperial interests or ambitions. They were a self-governing nation within an Empire in spite of every racial diversity—a needle in a haystack. Their intensely significant position did not, of course, commit them to revolutionary theories on the one hand, or to the exclusive nationalism of the Jews on the other. In public spirit and political animus they were pygmies beside the Stoicks. Their finest practical achievement—the abolition of the disgusting circuses—and their more intermittent one—the refusal to serve in the Roman armies—were only accidentally political in effect and totally the reverse in intention.

I hope I am not so completely bee-bonnetted as to credit the victory of the Christians over the Roman Empire to their withdrawal from it. Many causes contributed to that prodigious conquest and the most potent was the original ethical attitude of the new religion. The moral fervour of Christianity, and its ideals of universal love held a trump hand against the sterility, however noble, of the Stoicks, in a way that the certificates for Paradise and warrants for hell of a later day could never have done. The elevated and rather tedious creed of Marcus Aurelius cut the spirit of man in half; Christianity, without horses or men, but by that inner prompting which makes every man and woman the unofficial oracles of God, put the pieces together again.

But that the Christians' splendid gesture of withdrawal was an agent of incalculable force, who will deny? The withdrawal was in itself ethical without being dogmatically so. It preserved them unspotted from the corruption of the Roman world and kneaded them together so irresistibly that in their early days they were not so much a uniform association as a single individual, terrible in their helplessness, forlornness and remoteness as an army with banners. They bounded out of the tyranny of the present, the local and the habitual which has so imperious an influence upon the taking of long views. Climbing away at a distance upon their hill of vision they looked down upon the swarming valleys beneath, and the resistance to that intense gaze was that of the mist to the down-plunging and disencumbered rays of the sun. What happened when they had finished their meal of a world? History relates the sequel and its consequences. The Christians took office.

My second example is modern verse. What is taking place to-day and very healthily is not so much a revival of poetry as a transference of poetic allegiance from individuals into sets, classes and groups. Names there have been during the last few years, but they have been titles without solid estate behind them. Budded at the morn, they have been cut down at dewy eve. But these groups and classes, in spite of patronage, by no means adhere to a particular school or cult. Their virtue, apart from

those accidents which, though they get most of the credit, do not really influence poetic progress, is to foregather broadly and variously into a federation defined, but neither narrow nor dogmatic. The young soldiers' verse is an example. It is not realistic nor vers-librist nor eighteen-ninetyish nor cosmological nor magazinish nor obedient to what the public or the age or the poetic mode thinks that it wants, and is not so limited in subject-matter as the methods and conditions of its birth might warrant. Yet somehow it is of a piece; one general impulse informs its complexity; it possesses a corporate sense, even if that impulse and sense be derived only from a nearly unanimous detestation of the War.

This poetic decentralisation into groups and societies suggests a further reflection. A poetic revival is both child and father of the age. The poet and his age, that is to say, are interdependent, but the one cannot create the other without being created by it. But is our age favourable to poetic wealth, virility and freedom? Is society brilliantly conscious of itself; do ideas flow into all its parts like the streams in the fertile Hampshire plain; is the expression of its spiritual life alert, luminous or even coherent? Or is it all dumbness, anxiety, unhappiness, stress, chaos dominated by a crude and sterile discipline? It must itself answer these questions, but, in the meantime, one takes leave to doubt whether it can play the Jove to a poetic

Minerva, whether out of the lion of materialism can come forth sweetness. These poetic groups and unconfessed alliances then, so far from being formed, like Eve, out of the thigh of society, unconsciously form themselves in tacit criticism of it. The instincts of passive resistance and self-preservation draw the outlines.

Yet there are dangers in a lack of sympathy between the poet and the age in which he lives. There will be literary starvations and perversions, literary dogmas, corporate literary egoisms and probably few Titans of genius. The total effect of the poetry so produced might be more critical than creative. But poetry, if not altogether the criticism of life that Arnold called it, can very well exhibit the actual ironies and contrasts of life without committing itself to topics and controversies better adapted to prose. After all, the poetry of the lyrical ballads and the "Metaphysical School" of Crashaw, Herbert and Vaughan, originated in much the same way. Happily for themselves these groups do *not* meet the taste of the age. If the fool says in his Press that the whole land is juicy with the vineyards of poetic feeling, that eager hands are gathering the vintage, fermenting and bottling it, he may be left in his Paradise. Sanity knowing better, is glad to carry off from the little wayside inns such honest potables as it has sought and found.



**O**H thou, that dear and happy isle,  
The garden of the world erewhile,  
Thou Paradise of the four seas,  
Which Heaven planted us to please,  
But, to exclude the world, did guard  
With watery, if not flaming sword;  
What luckless apple did we taste,  
To make us mortal and thee waste?  
Unhappy! shall we never more  
That sweet militia restore,  
When gardens only had their towers  
And all the garrisons were flowers;  
When roses only arms might bear,  
And men did rosy garlands wear?

*Andrew Marvell*

**A**RT was not born in the palace; rather she fell sick there, and it will take more bracing air than that of rich men's houses to heal her again. If she is ever to be strong enough to help mankind once more, she must gather strength in simple places; the refuge from wind and weather to which the good man comes home from field or hillside; the well-tidied space into which the craftsman draws from the litter of loom, and smithy, and bench; the scholar's island in the sea of books; the artist's clearing in the canvas-grove—it is from these places that Art must come.

*William Morris*

**T**HE world interests us only because of the ideas which we form of it. Remove the idea and everything becomes sterile chaos, empty nothing.

*J. H. Fabre*

**I**T is not possible to disassociate art from morality,  
politics and religion. *William Morris*

**A**RT made by the people and for the people, a joy to the  
worker and the user. *Ibid*

**T**O have the sense of creative activity is the great happiness  
and the great proof of being alive.

*Matthew Arnold*

# COMMUNAL ART—I. EXPRESSION AND DECORATION

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TO return to the artist. He sees the individual, if the figure be not too fantastic, from both ends of the telescope; both as a leaf in the folio of brotherhood and the binding of one of the duodecimos of immortal love. That seems to imply a chapter or two or three on popular art. The drawback is that I am not qualified to write it. Having had a useless and merely formal school education (like most other boys of my “class”), the time of early manhood was spent not in developing the sensibilities which a school training had taught me to value and direct, not in cultivating the general powers of hand, mind and eye with which education had made me acquainted—but in laboriously finding out that I had learned nothing.\*Perfunctory

\* It is almost incredible that public schools should teach boys ■ mechanical Greek and Latin—but not how to draw, how to match and distinguish colours, how to differentiate one bird from another, one wild flower from another, beauty from ugliness, refinement from vulgarity, and so on. A sixth-form boy can turn out a set of stilted hexameters, but is he encouraged (I except the Perse School) to write English verse or to distinguish one cadence of our English poets from another? He is brought up to glorify the British Empire, not the beautiful land of England; to lose his precious imagination, as the Germans lost theirs in the tranced and vulgar contemplation of sheer bulk, to know the names of the Germanic tribes conquered by Cæsar, not the names and characteristics of the Gothic cathedrals. Do many boys know the difference between ■ moulding and ■ carving, between inlaid and relief work, between a cornice and a flying buttress? I did not. Boys are not only taught the wrong things, but taught them in the wrong way. The campaign in favour of scrapping

reading in the English classics and interminable in the ancient took the place of art and makeshift morals, the place of the art of manners in the sound and true sense of "manners maketh man."

I can only, therefore, discuss letters and them only from the pickings bolted in the intervals of the reviewer's doleful calling. Still, like industrialism, militarism and the rest, the arts all hang together, and, perhaps, the only distinction of literature is that it is the easiest to acquire and the most difficult to master. Likewise, the disease of one art ultimately means the disease of all art.

Is the future of literature, then, to be a swamp exhaling pestilential gases or a place of pastures and daylight?—

"So guide us through this darkness, that we may  
Be more and more in love with day."

To play the Cassandra may be as idle as wagging Nestor's beard over the past. But living as we are to-day in a state of paroxysm, it is reasonable to guess that either the fit will leave us in a coma which

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Latin and Greek for ■ business or scientific training is no doubt partly the result of this. It is good for boys to learn enough Latin to appreciate Virgil and Greek to appreciate Homer, Aristophanes, Euripides, etc.—if they want to; but if it is intolerable they should be stuffed with dead languages like tame geese. Somehow the facts are always isolated from their principles and applications and their relation to other facts. To this day, an idiotic jingle runs in my head—"bal, régâl, chacal." How do we know that the plural of "bal" is not "baux"?—because it would look wrong. For the patter itself, how much more charming and sensible and real, if we had been taught that the reedy pipe of the yellowhammer signifies in our tongue—"a little bit of bread and no chee-eese."

is the reception room of death, or we shall get better. If we settle down to a quiet life of bureaus and barracks, its monotony compensated by the fillip of wolfishness in human relations, the sooner literature gives up the ghost the better. But if—as in the old song, “My own sweet heart come home again,” the three F’s—freedom, faith and fellowship—return to us; if God (the one with a capital G)

“Settle and fix our hearts, that we may move  
In order, peace and love,  
And taught obedience by Thy whole Creation  
Become an humble, holy nation,”

what part will literature play? It is hardly enough to say that it will live and there leave it.

It is the incompetent midwife neglects the transitional pangs. While discussing a popular literature, that is to say, we have to formulate more or less what we think it ought to be. I propose, then, to carry through into a particular province the general argument on behalf of art set out in previous chapters.

It is best to begin by drawing a distinction between expression and decoration in literature and by assuming that what holds good for literature holds for the rest of the arts. The first essential of all true art is conviction. But, to avoid ambiguity, it is necessary to develop the meaning of conviction as applied to literature and to diagnose what rela-

ation it bears to expressive art as the forerunner of popular art. Now, it is true to say that literature and all the arts "are the expression of the society to which they belong." But one has to be careful not to misinterpret this axiom as a gospel of pure "modernism." For a literature entirely of its own day perishes with that day, neither surviving nor deserving to survive. Somebody said that the Renaissance was not a New Birth at all, but the fruit of those last centuries of the Middle Ages, when the arts, more dispersed through the community than at other periods, nearly became *vox populi, vox Dei*. Rodin calls Michaelangelo the culmination of all Gothic thought. The Renaissance was not so much a birth as a manhood, and in many respects a manhood in the sense covered by Vaughan's poem on "Childehood":

"An age of mysteries which he  
Must live twice, that would God's face see  
Which Angels guard, and with it play,  
Angels which foul men drive away.

"How do I study then and scan  
Thee, more than ere I studied man,  
And onely see through a long night,  
Thy edges and thy bordering light!  
O, for thy center and mid-day!  
For sure that is the narrow way.

So with the Romantic Revival. Had it merely taken a photographic impression of its age, it

would have ended in nothing more than a glorification of the Industrial Revolution, that guillotine which cut off man's continuous development from the past into the future. But we know that what the Romantic Revival really did was to divine, disencumber and materialise an inchoate spiritual idea, which the passage of a century has by no means brought to maturity. The present does not matter to a true literature, because, being a relative bridge between the past and the future, as an absolute conception it does not exist. Literature, like time and the planetary system, is always travelling. Its life is growth, while a creed of "modernism" *qua* modernism (as they say in donnish circles) can never express the society to which it belongs; literature becomes the *decoration of the society upon which it is dependent*. A glutinous adhesion to "modernism" implies a loss of the principal in the accessory, the end in the means, and "the spirit and truth of things" in machinery.

Take our society. In the mass, literature and the arts mean about as much to it as Sanskrit or an official document. If all the arts were abolished to-day by an Order in Council, what difference would it make to the people as a whole? None. The divorce between art and life is as complete as that between religion and life, as that between religion and art and men's normal way of thinking and feeling. The idea that thoughts and feelings are so intimately connected with religion and art as to be

their natural expression and proper goal, is regarded as an unintelligible flourish. No wonder that art is considered a superfluous luxury and religion a formal and necessary bore.

How, indeed, is literature possible to a *profanum vulgus* striving not to express its life but to burrow away from it in the dim warrens of escape, in the Aladdin's Cave of the Ideal? That cave is not at all dim, but garish and spectacular and full of penny-in-the-slot machines, for the great mechanical Polypheme of industry, to the service of whose appetite our lives are dedicate, provides the circuses not so much as a reward for the bread we provide for him as to prevent his little human machines from providing it in a fit of hard thinking for themselves. "The shallow murmur, but the deep are dumb," says Raleigh's beautiful line. They murmur because the deep are dumb. When the common life is dead, the Nine Muses are a beauty chorus in short and spangled frocks, and "The Little Grey Home in the West" is the song the syrens sang. When the arts are poor, they will take to their cups, and finally to their beds. Terrible is the contrast between the cast-iron conventions of our social life, the confusion raging underneath, and the feverish distractions on the surface. Let us, then, say the sufferers, be glad to leave our own flesh-and-blood of illusion for the illusion of flesh-coloured tights and the blood of horse-thieving cowboys. Where life is a kill-joy, art will be a kill-time.

But the art of escape is only the obverse of that which hugs its chains. There is back-scratching literature—the pressure upon the artist to produce work which will titillate the senses, flatter the interests and prejudices, melt the palpitating heart of his paymaster, and “exalt the virtues on which society is based, attachment to wealth, pious sentiments and especially resignation on the part of the poor.” “Popular” fiction discovers spiritual flowers in a commercial wilderness, a pitiful and throbbing heart in the lords of civilisation and Romance in everything. One has heard of poets, painters and men of letters, who, so far from leaving the banquet, like the effeminate Cædmon, have learned to stiffen the muscles, summon up the blood, and imitate the action of the tiger. It may be there is worse to come. Should the pall of absolutism in business and politics be laid upon our dear land in the days of peace, to what wake of propitiation and flattery will literature gather? What songs will it pipe to the glory of the *Pax Romana*? The derivation of cant is “canto,” a chant or hymn of praise to creation, so that the old canticle (with, of course, a gloss upon the two proper nouns) may come in handy:—“Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our king, sing praises.” True literature will be like the child, as recorded in Pliny’s Natural History, “which, as soone as it was come forth of the mother’s wombe, presently returned into it againe.”

Therefore, just as virtuosity is the correlative of ignorance, so a literature which merely reproduces its age will swing from one to the other and yet be one and the same thing. A false refinement is born of crudity, luxury of indigence, finery of rubbish, formality of formlessness, and the literature which escapes its age is as decorative as that which embraces it.

But expression (or representation) means something deeper. The really original contribution of "modernism" is not the conquest of Nature; we have "conquered" Nature only to make her our harlot. It is surely the idea of the equality and freedom of men, irrespective of classes and of nations. That is brand new. Plato, Epictetus, Plutarch, even Euripides never knew it, because it was not yet born into the world and the blossoming democracy of Athens was rooted in slave-labour.\* It follows, then, that a literature which is the true expression of modern society must be occupied not with parasitic forms and fashions of idle novelty, but with this original spiritual passion. It will identify itself with the rebellion of the human soul against externalisation and of human life against mechanisation.

If "modernism" does not mean this, it means nothing, or is, at the best, as much a distraction from reality as the variety-show is from life. It will

\* How much political ineptitude is derived from the study of Greek and Roman society by the class which nurtures our legislators?

be a distraction because it will be leading an artificial career in direct contradiction to our inmost convictions. Convictions are not opinions, any more than Form is the same as forms or accuracy of observation the same as truth of perception. Inasmuch, then, as this idea of freedom and equality is the guardian angel of our age, so its habitat will be our inmost convictions.

I have to tread delicately here, for up comes the old vice, or the patchwork herald who gives the signal for the joust between Art and Morality. I referred to this old but very real controversy two or three chapters ago. But it demands more careful treatment. In his happy and valuable little book "The Ultimate Belief," Mr. Clutton Brock describes the philosophy of the spirit as exercising three activities, the moral, the intellectual and the æsthetic or goodness, truth and beauty. But the advantage of pitching upon the "æsthetic activity" is because it comprehends its brethren more justly than they do it or each other. Art is more elastic than morality and truth; morality and truth are more sufficient to themselves than art. True, art is maimed, morality halt and truth blind, unless they draw upon one another. But art has more of the synthetic faculty than truth and goodness. Without violating the substance of its being, art does find its fullest development and beauty by absorbing truth and goodness. At any rate, art can be used as a convenient symbol of the interdependence of

truth, goodness and beauty. Or, to put it in another way, truth, goodness and beauty are implicit in the best and truest art, for while truth and goodness are a precise reading of the moral and intellectual activities, beauty is a limited one of the æsthetic. Keats, for example, was an æsthetic poet, Browning an intellectual, Wordsworth a moral poet, but Shelley and Blake combined in truth of intuition the qualities of all the three.\*

R. H. Hutton again, in one of his essays, says:—  
“So far from the truth is it that the poet must have no moral predilections at heart, that if he has none such, his picture becomes feeble, watery, unconvincing. Impartiality in delineation, not impartiality in conception, is what is needed.”† That

■ There is a passage in that delightful book of W. H. Hudson’s “The Purple Land,” which is not so irrelevant to this revaluation as it seems:—“Here the lord of many leagues of land and of herds unnumbered sits down to talk with the hired shepherd, a poor bare-footed fellow in his smoky rancho, and no class or caste difference divides them, no consciousness of their widely different positions chills the warm current of sympathy between two human hearts. How refreshing it is to meet with this perfect freedom of intercourse tempered only by that innate courtesy and native grace of manner peculiar to Spanish Americans. What a change to persons coming from lands with higher and lower classes and with their innumerable hateful sub-divisions—to one who aspires not to mingle with the class above him, yet who shudders at the slouching carriage and abject demeanour of the class beneath him.” Anybody who has lived in the country (especially among small farmers and peasant proprietors where the property idea loses its Sunday manners) must have been bewildered by the extraordinary niceties of caste prevailing among people who, to innocent appearance, have not only common interests, houses exactly alike, a common occupation and language, but are descended from precisely the same class. All these ludicrous distinctions are exactly proportioned to the success in money-making of the people concerned.

† Mr. Hewlett’s really grand poem, “The Village Wife’s Tragedy,” affords an interesting example. Fearing lest he should be captured by the Pacifists, Mr.

has nothing to do with philanthropy. The philanthropist wants to "improve" people; the artist to reveal them to their true selves.

Nor do these "moral predilections" commit art to pamphleteering nor traipsing the streets with "Be good" on its sandwich boards. Molière pilloried vice and folly, but he hated Puritanism. Aristophanes was a Pacifist who hated sophistry, demagogery and war-mongers. But he did not write like Brieux. As soon as art draws the moral, it is drawn by it. Art, like the firmament, contains the earth, but it does not expressly write letters of fire across it. Those people who are always clamouring for the moral in a work of art are own children to those who, in the Scriptures, asked for a sign. Yet literature and art should be conscious of sharing a common aspiration and sentiment, at present inaccessible to the common run of men. "A man cannot be an artist," writes Clutton Brock, "if he has no conscience and there is always something of the moral conscience

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Hewlett denies the implicit verdict of his poem in an appendix. Still, Mr. Hewlett expiatory can no more annotate away Mr. Hewlett in his poetics than the worthies of the Church can the Song of Solomon. "The Village Wife's Tragedy" is a Pacifist poem, in the sense that Vaughan's "Constellations" is a Pacifist poem, in the sense that the "Ancient Mariner" is a plea for kindness to animals. In other words, and like all good and true poems, it is an imaginative presentation of the truth of life. I remember a German print in which a circle of gentlemen are seated round a lily in a pot. One of the company, gazing and pointing up at the sky and with a small greenish-yellow hoop round his head, is remarking: "Consider the lilies of the field." The others are gazing musingly either on the ground or into the distance, anywhere, in fact, but at the lily. Mr. Hewlett must explain himself away because, being a poet, he looks at the lily and in simple forcible language, tells us what it is and means.

in that—enough at least to make him see the beauty of holiness. So, too, there is always enough of the æsthetic conscience in the saint to see the holiness of beauty.” What is St. Francis, more saint than artist or artist than saint? Po-chü-i, the ninth century poet, does not seem to me to have outraged the poetic proprieties when he wrote:—

“I wish I had a rug ten thousand feet long  
Which at one time could cover up every inch of  
the City.”

Accepting then the association of art with convictions, we shall see that they happen at the same time to correspond with the “enlightened self-interest” of all the arts themselves. Bitter experience is teaching us that the prosperity of art depends on no individual, however great, but on the freedom and happiness of the community. Art, as a livelihood for all, becomes the aim of art. “Let us say,” cried the old champion of deliverance, “let us say that we (the artists) have a property which your tyranny of squalor cheats us of: we also have a morality, which its baseness crushes: we also have a religion which its injustice makes a mock of.” The aim of art is to turn machines into men and happy workers, to give back to men individuality in co-operative creation. Freedom, leisure, non-routine education, health, active minds working in common to the stimulus and response of a kindred environment—these are seen to be the rivers,

valleys and mountains diversifying and composing the landscape of beauty.

The literary “modernist” then will perceive, in the first place, that there is something wrong in the notion that the arts and the enjoyment of life are an exclusive monopoly of the few, the privilege of wealth, the ornament of luxury and, in the second, that æsthetic perception, being a prerogative of the human soul, is not killed in the people, but only atrophied and vulgarised by the hideous environment in which they are compelled to live, and the equally hideous idols they are compelled to worship. He will take into consideration the fact that, as Ben Jonson puts it:—“It is a false quarrel against Nature, that she helps understanding but in a few, when the most part of mankind are inclined by her thither, if they would take the pains; no less than birds to fly, horses to run, etc., which, if they lose it, is through their own sluggishness, and by that means they become her prodigies, not her children.” How he shapes this conception—how, that is to say, he fits it into the proper notation of his art—is his concern, not mine. Obviously, so earth-shaking an idea will be Protean in the number of formulas adaptable to the literary substance. The subject-matter is only secondary, and one formula for one artist may be false for another. It is of importance to underline the fact that art is quite independent of its subject-matter. It is a positive energy and laughs at locksmiths. But it does not laugh at

the law of the spirit. To that it is obedient or perishes.

Take, for instance, the work of W. H. Hudson, one of our very few contemporary great artists. He has nothing to say about liberty and equality. It would be easier to find in him—and with reason—a touch of misanthropy. Yet because of the imaginative intensity by which he feels the contact of the forms of material nature with their spiritual origin, and because he possesses a power of identifying himself with the secret processes of nature, which some might call fay and others pagan, but which I should prefer to call religious; because his art is conceived and expressed rather as vision, prophecy and religion than anything smaller—we feel that he does intrinsically belong to that kind of “modernism” I have tried to represent. His manhood feels the truth of Nature, and by them both the truth of man. Nature keeps her truth, man violates his and Nature’s. Keep his own and he will know and keep hers.

This brings me to one last suggestion before closing the chapter. Art that is expressive and convincing (*i.e.*, art that is a vocation—*see* Chapter VIII) will on that account embrace a larger conception than faith in man. Faith in man, that is to say, is a natural consequence of faith in the universe. The nearer, that is to say, we bring “morality” into line with the faith, the design, the idea which our finer apprehensions realise to be the truth of

the universe, the greater will be our art. For art, priest of the universe, is the John Baptist not of reason, but, so to speak, of the thinking, brooding soul of God and Nature. Art and letters express a belief in the universe. Being a confession of faith they cannot exist without meaning and purpose. Or if they can so exist, they are what the publisher (speaking of literature) calls “belles lettres.” As Blake said:—“Everything possible to be believed is an image of truth.” Art “calls heaven to witness,” its “answer is in the affirmative,” it vouches for the spiritual truth of life and ratifies it.

**A** GOOD painter has two chief objects to paint, man and the intention of his soul.      *Leonardo da Vinci*

**T**HAT figure is most worthy of praise which, by its action best expresses the passion which animates it.

*Ibid*

**O**NE begins by plaguing oneself to no purpose in order to be true to nature and one concludes by working quietly from one's own palette alone—and then Nature is the result.

*Vincent Van Gogh*

**D**ID we realise the fact that society is a growth and not a manufacture—a thing that makes itself, not a thing that can be artificially made.

*Herbert Spencer*

**T**HOU findest arts of all kinds; choose then for thyself that which is like to be of greatest service to thee; learn it; let not the difficulty thereof vex thee till thou hast accomplished somewhat wherewith thou mayest be satisfied.

*Dürer*

**B**UT to me religion is more than the mumbling of a creed. It is the meaning of all that is unexplained and inexplicable in the world. It is the adoration of the unknown force which maintains the universal laws and preserves the types of all beings; it is the surmise of all that in Nature does not fall within the domain of sense, of all that immense realm of things which neither the eyes of our body nor even those of our spirit can see; it is the impulse of our conscience towards the infinite, towards eternity, towards unlimited knowledge and love. . . . In this sense I am religious.

*Rodin*

## COMMUNAL ART—II.

A *LINGUA FRANCA* AND  
WORK FOR ITS OWN SAKE

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EVIDENTLY some kind of adjustment has to be sought between the super-intellectual and the vulgarian. The art of the former, left derelict outside the tide and impulse of a common understanding, will lose character and motive. He will gradually improve upon Nature, painting the lily, arranging the flowers of beauty in the vases of his own invention, and imposing his own arid ingenuities in arbitrary patterns that gradually approach the special vice of the vulgarian—meaningless decoration. Chaos, the black charger of death, with its riders the super-intellectual and the vulgarian, brands the mark of its hoof upon the forehead of life. Rodin points out that art without character, without the inner prompting, is essentially ugly, however fanciful and plausible the forms it may take. But in the transformation of the inward truth to the outward expression, there is literally nothing ugly, nothing in the whole circumference of art and Nature. When the novelist makes a “happy ending” in defiance of the logic of Nature, he is deforming truth and so making ugliness. When the painter reproduces Nature upon his canvas, his

elaborate draughtsmanship is only ugly and stupid. Until that which is hidden is revealed, beauty cannot "wave in its plumes the various light." The light of beautiful truth cannot be obscured from Baudelaire's terrible anguish:—

"Et pourtant vous serez semblable à cette ordure  
A cette horrible infection,  
Etoile de mes yeux, Soleil de ma nature,  
O mon ange et ma passion!  
Oui, telle vous serez, O la reine des Grâces  
Apres les derniers Sacraments,  
Quand vous irez sous l'herbe et les floraisons  
grasses  
Pourrir parmi les ossements."

That surely has plumbed something of the unfathomably precious depth and murmured the farthest-heaven-transfixing prayer of men to the infinite.

Somehow and somewhere then people and things, the arts and humanity must become man and wife. Art must not only possess this conviction of humanity, but must herself become more communal in spirit. But it is futile to discuss communal art at all, unless pleasure and art are inseparably associated. Although art cannot be created for the sake of the pleasure to be got out of it, still less can it be created without the pleasure that must accompany its creation. Pleasure and art are equally sworn foes of drudgery.

How can this canon be applied to a popular art? Firstly, as I indicated in previous chapters, by expanding its range to include the work of the entire community. Painting, music, literature, sculpture are not the monopoly of art; cutting out a frock, hoeing a potato-patch or almost anything a man or woman can do, have a right to be considered "artistic" and an obligation to become so. Secondly, the condition of art is that all these activities, so far as is compatible with our mortal shortcomings, should be pleasurable and interesting in themselves. Thirdly, character, idea and a sense of the mysterious and eternal being the inspiration of true art, its aim, as a popular art, is to infuse them into everything a society makes and does. Fourthly, this kind of art can only be born of the practical uses and spiritual needs of the community. The arts fulfilling these demands will naturally gather about the house and its thousandfold stirs and needs as the expression of man's normal existence. They will gather about a house—more, a building, more, a church. Just, in fact, as the exhibition picture, the "subject-picture" in the gilt frame would be superseded by the picture either painted straight upon the wall-space or adapted to the architectural and decorative whole of the "domestic interior," or, in other words, to the daily need and pleasure of the people who live in it; so all the arts are likely in the end to become the passionate expression of men's and women's wonder, satisfaction in and apprehen-

sion of the miracle of daily life, life shared and life experienced.

It may be objected that this is to bring the imaginative arts down to the level of the applied arts. But I am making no such comparisons of excellence. Literature may surely be "applied" and masonry imaginative. The Spirit of Beauty possesses hands and feet, as well as heart, eyes and head. Sense is not different in kind from Spirit. If we cannot see the beauty of this world we may be sure we shall not see that of the other. If we neglect the applied arts, we shall, in the end, lose the imaginative ones. All the arts are of one family.

A single consciousness is the goal to be achieved in the end. A flock of fifty starlings, making a single curve in beautiful unison, possesses that consciousness in a way that a company of soldiers wheeling mechanically to left or right can never do. That consciousness realised, and letters, painting, architecture, etc., resting upon the synthetic feelings of mankind, literature steps into the confidence of Nature, and acknowledges no bounds in its adventures towards the unknown.

Take Millet, the frontispiece to the yet unwritten book of a future popular art. Millet painted the elemental feelings and doings of the peasants, of the people who navigate the mystery of life between field and cottage, cottage and field. With him art comes into touch with the very simplest elements of human life—uncomplicated work, suffering and

poverty. It would, of course, be wrong and dogmatic to suggest that a peasant art is desirable in itself (which was where Tolstoi went wrong) or that Millet was a greater artist than Velasquez, because the one painted peasants and the other kings. Art is not to be thus dictated to by its subjects, nor will an art, for instance, which is sick of expressing a few type-ideas of the middle classes, become any more communal by expressing a few type-ideas, say of a trade union. What we should ask is whether the art of Millet is dull because he happened to paint peasants? Does it not rather express the workings of the living and transfigured human spirit upon these simple elements and of them upon the living human spirit? Into what august mysteries of being do his figures tempt the inquisitive mind? What are they gleaning, sowing, reaping? —the experience of all knowledge and all sorrow, the histories of peoples, the record of the tribulation of the human soul. The human spirit makes its majestic gesture—questions in lowness and sublimity the mystery of suffering, and accepts with bowed resignation the destiny of martyrdom. To what chorus of thanksgiving, mingled with memorial tears, will not the literature of a redeemed people, whose happiness will be the gift of this martyred spirit so solemnly incarnated by Millet, give voice?

A communal art, then, will lean more and more to “wholesomeness,” by which I mean usefulness

for and delight in the purposes of life and a sense on the one hand of the concrete as the clothing of the abstract, and on the other of the universal in the individual and the personal in the community. These conditions are interdependent, for while great art always sees the universal in the particular, it does not lose sight of the particular in the universal. The road through to the unknown and the intangible may be hard and rough, but it is quite definite. Brotherhood is the release of the subconscious, which is the universal self, essentially the same in all men and each individual is a little theatre of all mankind. The law of humanity is the same as the law of art. Strange as it may seem, the independence and individuality of each separate human being are the guarantee of their communion. When people are squeezed together under an artificial system they will fly or try to fly off at tangents. But human beings, if given their best chance and freed from formal and forced contracts of union—will fall into each other's arms. They know they can fall out again if they choose.\*

To apply the argument, take the relation between literature and common speech. There is no common speech nowadays. The amenities of language decline with the amenities of a free

\* In marriage, for instance, the formal and irrefragable bond is an invitation to break it. The more heavily penalised is adultery, the more frequent are its occurrences. Jeremy Bentham said: "Render marriage soluble and you increase the number of apparent separations, but diminish the number of real ones."

people. As the bureaucrat spreads his legions (a swarm bred, so to speak, out of a decaying body) and his coupons over the land, so the love of beauty and right speaking, censored by Government, despised by business, debauched by newspapers, and beyond the grasp of labour, retires into scattered citadels. As the public yields to the aggrandisement and self-vindication of small cerebralities, language—the normal language that we all speak—has a way of becoming grandiose and pretentious; so that even children and farm-labourers patter their verbal Imperialisms. The process of separation between literature and common speech, accelerated by the Industrial Revolution, has since the war been granted a *decreet nisi*.

Even in provincial dialects, the combination between the two survives so scantily and faintly as to be moribund, and the old county glossaries and topographies make the saddest reading. Yet from them comes the impression of the wealth, abundance and vivid precision of the rustic words in use only forty years ago. These words signified not a dual, but a triple alliance—between poetry, common speech and literary tradition. The tongue that Shakespeare spake was embalmed in the utterance of the peasant. Nor were these words the private property of the antiquary; they were a living speech, strong in themselves, in their survival, in their beauty and their fidelity to truth. Now that they have nearly all retired before their townly young re-

lations in business, we feel as though we had buried a living body. There was Beaumont and there Fletcher working in the fields.\*

The perfume of flowers was matched by that of the rustic words which named them. A few still linger in the national garden, still form part of our racial anthology. But the iron claw of industrialism is down upon them; swift and bright, lithe and supple though they are. "Nap-at-noon," "Old Man's Beard," "Traveller's Joy"—now are nothing but wild clematis. "Wake-Robin," "Angle-berry," "Robinhoods," "Shepherd's Dial," "Le gant de Notre Dame" (fox-gloves), "Love lies a-bleeding," "Three faces under a hood," "Sops-in-wine"—which reminds me of old Bishop Andrewes's early morning song:—

"Come, be my valentine  
I'll gather eglantine,  
Cowslips and sops-in-wine  
With fragrant roses."

So with the birds and the seasons. Isaac and Philip (who comes down from old melodious Skelton) are gone; Jenny and Robin will no doubt follow them. The "rain-tabberer," the "yaffingale," the

\* In the North Country, the moon was said to "tine," i.e., close her light. Vaughan's "Cock-crowing" has:—

"Their eyes watch for the morning-hue,  
Their little grain, expelling night,  
So shines and sings, as if it knew  
The path unto the house of light;  
It seems their candle, howe'er done  
Was tined and lighted at the sun."

"oven-bird," the "flittermouse" (Ben Jonson's "giddy flittermouse with leathern wings")—all, all are gone, the old familiar names. Lost words—and the birds themselves are following them! In metaphor, too, poetic and natural truths prospered up to their golden wedding, and now natural truth is a widow. In the cold weather of April, when the blackthorn bears its own and alien snows—the Northern dalesman no longer speaks of "the winter of the blackthorn." So, in old days, he saw not a clump, but a "plumè of trees," echoing all unconsciously the delicate perceptions of Marvell:—

"Upon its crest, this mountain grave  
A plume of aged trees does wave."

How long ago, to end this sentimental elegy, was it since haws were known as "pixy-pears," which, according to the poet Barnes, in his Dorset glossary, is scientifically accurate. Not that that matters.

The carol, too, is pretty well laid with its fathers. A few perfunctory and husky youths gather outside the front-door nowadays and nasalise that poor thing of the Rev. Dr. Neale's—"Good King Wenceslaus"—and thespavined puppets are put back in their sawdust. The "festivities" are over. "Remember, O Thou Man," "I Saw Three Ships Come Sailing In," "The Seven Virgins" (one of the loveliest things in the language), the "Holy Well," or "I sing of a maiden, That is makeless," are not sung to-day in the streets, as they have been sung in England for

five hundred years. Carols and Nativity songs are, too, a form of popular literature expressed in the poets. But the carol, like the ballad, is an anonymous literature and in its clear, wistful, earthly-heavenly notes one can discern what a communal art, founded upon equality, may produce. The wonderful thing about the more mystical carols is the way they can spin "things that you may touch and see" into a white samite which is the robe of beauty itself. These are a few lines from "The Cherry-Tree Ballad," which the withering prudishness natural to the joyless age of Commerce has banished:—

"O then bespoke Mary,  
So meek and so mild,  
Pluck me one cherry, Joseph,  
For I am with child.

"O then bespoke Joseph,  
With words most unkind,  
Let him pluck thee a cherry,  
That brought thee with child.

"O then bespoke the babe,  
Within his mother's womb,  
Bow down then the tallest tree,  
For my mother to have some.

"O, eat your cherries, Mary.  
O, eat your cherries now,  
O, eat your cherries, Mary,  
That grow upon the bough."

The miracles of tact these old carols performed might be called gentility, were it not something so much greater and more serious. Their quality, indeed, goes beyond the uniformity of the naïve. Literature often reconciles characteristics which, in actual life, diverge and the carols, that are so friendly and so remote, so wise and so childish, so matter-of-fact and often so mysterious, have drunk the milk of Paradise.

If our common nature and our common humanity are not good enough material for art, let us abandon it for ever and devote ourselves to perfecting explosives that will one day rid this planet of us altogether. But of course, they are good enough.\* All Nature is arrayed in the garment of the spirit and in the light of its own spirit humanity beholds it and marvels at the divine meaning of all those hieroglyphs wrought into the fabric, all that symbolic biography of God. "Those gentle craftsmen of the Middle Ages," wrote Rodin, "saw infinite goodness everywhere. And, with their charming simplicity, they have thrown reflections of this lovingkindness even on the faces of their demons, to whom they have lent a kindly malice and an air almost of relationship with the angels." *Omnia opera*—their praise is not in our tongue, but man

\* Some judgements might object that it was not the business of writers, painters, builders to write, paint and build down to the meanest understanding. Of course not. What the artist appeals to is the dumb instinct towards art in which all men share. His business is to give a lead to this instinct and a voice to this dumbness.

sets down the broken chords of the hymn that baffles and enchanteth him.

But a common speech is irrecoverable so long as material power and Industrialism menace the human spirit, and their supremacy creates such inequalities that they result in two classes which literally talk different languages. Until all men are free to develop their natural lives, until they are educated to appreciate art in youth, and accustomed to work in manhood according to the spirit of art, literature may go seek for its instrument—a common speech. It is not, therefore, a foolish dream to stress the artist's duty to the community on the one hand and its need of him on the other. He must look communally both at his art and his fellow-men. He must help the people to recover the eyesight that Commerce has darkened.

That adorable poet, William Barnes, whom I mentioned above, is a good instance of this reconciliation between what we say and what we write. He happens to be one of the most curious, and, at the same time, felicitous examples of the connection between poetry and common speech in literature. He adapts a very rough-shod dialect, not only to normal rhyme, but to a premeditated, finished and elaborate technique of rhythmical composition, which is invariably fastidious and sometimes academic. This is not the place to go into his devices and dexterities of sound and rhyme, but here is a little sample:—

“And there vor me the apple tree  
Do lean down low on Linden Lea.”

The artful lingering softness of this last line is achieved by employing and arranging together only four consonants and four vowels. Thus did a country parson marry “greasy Joan” to the courtier from London.\*

A common language is, indeed, a fine thing to aim at. In time, and as the common consciousness of our inner selves becomes more unified and more articulate, so language will become more closely identified with other modes of expression. It will become an integral part of gesture, movement, music and the dance. Perhaps some new and at present unimaginable symmetry of expression, fully expressing this unification of all our senses may arise. When wings are tongues and tongues are wings, we shall in verity be but a little lower than the angels instead of the brutes! For feelings and ideas, belonging to our common nature and our

\* I am not, of course, suggesting that dialect is a desirable end in itself. It is only that, if it is a living and expressive not (as it is) a dying speech. When peace came, for instance, the common consciousness of men suddenly rose up and was revealed—even if only negatively, in the aspect of relief from anxiety and suffering—and he who could have expressed that consciousness in noble and fitting language would have been a democratic poet, as Shelley was, as Blake was, who did not write in dialect and may not be read by the working classes; so when Shakespeare wrote: “We are such stuff as dreams are made of and our little life is rounded by a sleep,” he was writing democratic popular poetry. If, that is to say, a common denominator of common ideas and emotions be found, the highest common factor of language will find itself. For it is not our great poets who are to blame because the working classes do not read them; it is not the latter’s fault because they do not read the poets. But for the system and the men who are responsible, it were better for them they should be cast into the depths of the sea.

common humanity are, so belonging, universal and, if universal, mystic in beauty and infinite in their power of expansion.

But I must leave communal art in action to discuss it as a principle. Let us return, therefore, to the "law of materials" argued in a previous chapter, for it bears very closely both upon communal art and the artist's personality.

To begin with the poet. The schoolmaster, leading his young charges into the sacred grove, generally begins, like all well-conducted guides, by deriving the word "poet" from the Greek  $\piολειν$ = to make. The poet, he explains, is a maker, and then leaves all the gaping young penguins to make the best of it they can. It is doubtful whether any derivation can be more erroneous or do more harm to the precise study of poetic meaning and purpose. Sometimes making is wildly identified with inspiration. Now the word inspiration (Morris denied it, but then that was one of his fads) does both by origin and use really convey some distinction of values as well as elucidating the difficult poetic function. It does more—it carries weight as well as atmosphere, a picture as well as an idea, and those who think in terms of pictures will not go far wrong if they conceive their poet accompanied by a kind of Socratic dæmon. Inspiration brings into play the proper oracular notion and keeps poetry close to the chariot-wheels of Truth. Poetry is true, so long as it is subsidiary; effective so

long as it does not act "off its own bat," real so long as it is obedient to a directing impulse which the romanticism of a material world treats as of no practical importance in the affairs of daily life.

It is questionable whether the poet, or any other kind of artist, "makes" anything at all; the thing he is working upon is there—ready-made. His business is simply to reveal it in full consciousness to other eyes and minds and hearts that cannot see or apprehend or feel it; or if they can, only do so "subconsciously." He is always hunting about for the best way to get this material to speak its own idiom. He does not "make" it at all. He simply strips away from it all those inconvenient wrappings that conceal it from the apprehension of others. Surely that is the principal reason why we hail Rodin as a great genius. He saw inside the block a magical figure, and set to work with a chisel to clear away all that imprisoning surface which kept other people from seeing the figure. Do not those marvellous figures *blossom* out of the stone and marble in exactly the same way as a tree blossoms out of the earth, in exactly the way as art itself blossoms out of life? Rodin did not invent those radiant figures, varying from the most immaterial delicacy to the most strenuous physical agony of longing—Rodin, who asserted his faith in the universal soul as few other moderns have done and uncurtained it upon the theatre of humanity, shaking its prison bars to gain the land of Luthor, the region Elenore.

He did not invent them, he *saw* them and dedicated the unresting labour of two generations to releasing those figures to the world's contemplation. Yet the legend persists that the artist is an egoist—presumably because he is the only worker who really enjoys his work.

Of course, it is possible to aim "at understanding the world and making it understood," at conjuring this vision into life, and yet to be an egoist in art. The world itself can be pressed into the employment of the ego. But when the worker is intent upon doing something that is worth while (the capture of this vision) rather than worth *his* while, the personality of the artist will take good care of itself. That, I imagine, is what Leonardo means when he says "good literature proceeds from men of natural probity." Whatever he may incidentally hope from the proceeds, the true artist is all fire and concentration upon the process. He is doing the work for the work's sake and not for the sake of the personality involved in it. That personality, if anxious to exploit itself before the gaze of society, will, perhaps, find itself reflecting the official personality of society. It will act up to what is expected of it, and will be cut to pattern, like Dora Forbes in Henry James's "Death of the Lion."

To assume, for instance, that an author possessed by the desire to give body, limbs, a voice to the inchoate material wherein is hidden a spiritual truth—or in other words, by the literary passion—is at

pains only to cut a figure before the world, is to confuse cause with effect. If he reverses the position and make his art the tool of his personality, he is creating ugliness.

For the first principle of art is disinterestedness. Fame, pride, pleasure, a market and an audience are all healthy stimulants to the genuine artist, but to make them the parents rather than the brethren of his task is a very narrow reading of the artistic impetus. The artist does not “out-top knowledge” and stand “self-school’d, self-scann’d, self-honoured, self-secure”; so far is he from the megalomania of the infinite-in-capacity school that he is nothing more than a patient or uneasy instrument of that secret purpose our forefathers used to call God. He is the Æolian harp played upon by the “queer, unpleasant, disturbing touch of the kingdom of heaven.” So far from being the Sybil, he is only the Sybil’s secretary, and in so far as he serves that purpose to the best of his faith and wits, he is a disinterested agent. It may be said that Montaigne, who so delightedly explored the New Found Land of himself, was thereby an artist of deformity. Not at all, because he himself was the material, the idea. He did not exploit his personality, but expressed it. His real was to his detached self what Rodin’s figures were to Rodin. He unselfishly devoted himself to colonising and civilising this enchanting country of curious feelings and temperament for the habitation of the whole world. His ego to him

was part of that mysterious idea which dwells within the bosom of Nature.

If, indeed, some example is wanted of what this literary passion means—take the supreme one, Henry James. Those noble and profound masterpieces ("The Death of the Lion," "The Next Time," and the others) deal with it as no one else has ever dealt. These stories are literally unique, for their intuition into that passion is something—not uncanny—but divine. He invests the idea of the artist with a splendour that only his incomparable art could give it. James expressed psychological relations more intimate, more imponderable to the average scale, than have ever been expressed before; he was a genius, whose ample and at the same time delicate style was the fit, the only fit instrument of a thought stretching to capture the workings of human emotions hovering out of the reach of all but the supreme inspiration, the finest of shades, the most rarefied of impressions. He is to be called the greatest of latter-day artists, because he made entirely fresh pilgrimages into and entirely fresh discoveries of the intricate human mechanism; James, whose tremendous respect for the human being made him godlike, but not Olympian. For assuredly he dwelt among men. He (who is to man what W. H. Hudson is to Nature) first made clear to me the generous devotion of the artist to the cause of art, his fellow-men and the holiness of life.

For the business of the artist is to translate the mystery of the visible universe and through that of the invisible to the hearts of men. His technique is only of service to him so long as it is the instrument which enables him to make the infinite complexity of that vision as relevant, as expressive, as clear as may be.\* Leonardo writes:—"The soul can never be infected by the corruption of the body, but acts in the body like the wind which causes the sound of the organ, wherein if one of the pipes is spoiled, the wind cannot produce a good result in that pipe." Is this to depreciate the virtues of pains, composition, and style? On the contrary, it is to accentuate them, since the vision will emerge imperfect without them and the eye that sees it, squint. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord! Make His paths straight!" is a little volume on what the Americans call "technics."

Donne is a good example. Arthur Symons, in his essay on him, declares that he preferred truth to beauty and wrote many of his poems before the personal had had time to fuse with the poetic inspiration. Donne, he says, was intent on the passion itself, without waiting for the crystallisation of form and tranquillity. Donne, he means, in fact, does not embody and translate his passion; he feels it emotionally and observes it intellectually. One has only to think what fatal influence Donne's

\* To make the vision perfectly apparent is, indeed, impossible, since it is of heaven, and heaven looks in through the dim skylight of our mortality. It will not for that less provoke our wonder and desire.

methods had in prompting certain extravagances in English poetry to recognise a good deal of subtle truth in this. But it is not the whole truth. Donne's finest poetry but rarely possessed felicity *in* form, but it had a wonderful Form that united the otherwise distracted parts of his complex psychology. "The Apparition" is, for instance, rough, crabbed, and abrupt, in externals; but at the end of it tranquillity filters through its ferocity as though, even in so wide and fierce a circuit of the emotions, the wheel had come full circle and there was nothing more to be said. Donne's form does, at its best, contain and rivet the tremendous adventures of his soul and mind. There is no misfire about it—nothing random or wasted. Let the emotion come through undamaged and there is nothing wrong with the technique. The substance has found its manhood. It is when the spirit and truth of things are lost in machinery, the principal in the accessory, the end in the means, that technique will bear the arbitrary relations to the material of conception that the modern State does to mankind.

We come back, then, to the materials, to the law of the identity of form and substance which governs art. The artist, who recognises a calling so lofty as this, cannot neglect the great human substance. It is of no consequence what his subject-matter may be. He is there to release the creative spirit, and that spirit finds its highest ambition in the release of the capacity of men to its free, appropriate and

enjoyable exercise. Thus does conviction become identified with the artistic function.

But this attention to the materials bears in yet another direction upon communal art. The creative spirit of man is at present perverted into false romantics. All the dreary sexuality (sex is the only thing left to romanticise in our intolerably prosaic world), the sentimentalism and raucous vulgarity in so many places are man's safety-valve for articulating his starved feelings. The true value and romance of life—a new way of looking at life—will come to us, not only through the release of the creative spirit, but actually by the process of releasing it and the attention concentrated upon it. Let us, then, follow up the meaning of this word "process," for it carries with it the exaltation of common life from the bottom upwards.

The central principle of the Commercial State (as I suggested in Chapter IV) is that we should do things for the sake of getting something out of them. An average business man does a thing, that is to say, for the sake of something else, and judges it by the profitable or unprofitable realisation of that something else. The condition of the world to-day shows what terrible consequences this practice has had upon politics, education, trade and ethics. The artist retaliates, as it were, by doing his work for its own sake and thus, by fulfilling a simple canon both of morals and æsthetics, undermines the business principle, not stirring an inch mean-

while from the nature and character of his own function. At the same time, work for its own sake is work for his sake, and for the sake of his fellows. It is necessary to stress and even repeat unto the third and the fourth paraphrase the *moral* value of doing the work of the universe without counting the cost. The more, that is to say, the heart and mind are bent upon the object, the greater spiritual growth and artistic grasp will become; and in this double expansion lies the vindication as well as the reward of devotion. To quote Clutton Brock (whose clairvoyance into the nature of the spirit is so beautifully reflected in his work) once more:—"Our joy . . . is in discovering that which can be valued for its own sake, and in recognising that it is to be valued for its own sake, that it is good in itself." When Coleridge asked Clarkson, the Abolitionist, whether he ever thought of his probable fate in the next world, he gave this noble reply: "How can I? I think only of the slaves in Barbadoes."

From this point of view the Bible is a gold-field of æsthetic precept. "Take no thought for the morrow"; "Cast your bread upon the waters." Then there is Whitman's "The gift is to the giver and comes back most to him," and Francis Thompson's:—

"Plough thou the rock until it bear;  
Know, for thou else could'st not believe;  
Lose, that the lost thou may'st receive;  
Die, for none other way can'st live."

In St. Francis de Sales's "A Treatise of the Love of God" occurs this delectable little passage:—"So Nightingales, according to Plinie, take such complacence in their songes, that by reason of this complacence, for five dayes and five nightes long they never leave warbling, forcing themselves to sing better, in despight one of the other; so that when they chirpe the best, they take a greater complacence, and it is increase of complacence carrieth them to force themselves to a better quavering, augmenting in such sort their complacence by their songe and their songe by their complacence, that often they are seene to fall downe dead splitting their weesells with the violence of singing. Birdes worthy the fair name of Philomele, sith they die in this sorte, of and for the love of melodie." Where the godship is Mammon's, nothing is done for its own sake.

But we can carry and develop this philosophy of opposites much further than this. Professor L. P. Jacks has an essay which sums the whole thing up extraordinarily well. The economic, he says, has outstripped the moral development of man and the nations were morally unprepared for their material prosperity. They cannot prevent all this money from being a curse and can do nothing better than quarrel over it at home and abroad. In the present condition of international morality, this wealth provokes wars. War is the necessary sequel to an atmosphere of hatred, suspicion and ambition. For

wealth (here comes the significance of the whole argument) *when produced* is the cause of War. Militarism will always feed on the fruits of industry. The quantitative standard of accumulation, the distinction between the *process* and the *fruits* of wealth have plunged us all into this unspeakable misery. This distinction seems to me of paramount importance. It not only indicates the cause of the decline of European civilisation, but points to a spiritual revolution. The abolition not of the House of Commons (desirable as it may or may not be), but of the *ulterior motive* should be the reformer's programme of "reconstruction." The meaning of life is in the process, not the proceeds, in concentration upon identifying substance with Form. In this light, how profoundly revealing are Blake's words:—

"He who bends to himself a joy  
Doth the wingèd life destroy;  
But he who kisses the joy as it flies,  
Lives in eternity's sunrise."

Let the men who seek a better order inscribe that on their banners! For its contrary is, indeed, the cause of the war. The ulterior motive seems to gather about it a sinister alliance of the forces of darkness. In Germany, as one might say, the patriot, the fighter and the trader were of rapacity all compact.\*

\* In Edmond Holmes's "Nemesis of Docility," one reads that "the industries of the country are dominated by some three hundred men, about ■ score of

But the difference between Germany and the other great nations is a difference only in the greater power of resistance of the human soul. Nor shall we ever develop the art of the spirit by beating Germany in the field and losing to her in the soul. That soul is both corrupt and impotent so long as property is the origin, property the means and property the end of modern European States. The desire of gaining this property and the fear of losing it become the simple appetites upon which much of the complex structure of civilisation is built. It is inevitable that the richest nations in the history of the world should have plunged into its most destructive war; it is an ironic fatality that a gigantic evil of consumption should devour an equally gigantic evil of production, and that the principle of waste in peace should be matched by the principle of waste in war. Never will these tortured countries find peace either at home or abroad, until it is no longer respectable to cultivate the acquisitive instinct, until men turn their minds away from the art of making the riches of money, to use Morris's phrase, to that of making the wealth of life, from what is unworthily made to that which is worthy in the making.

Such making is in itself a promise and guarantee

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whom form an inner oligarchy which, linked with the German money trust, connected with the Government and, in many cases, in close personal touch with the Kaiser, control all the industrial resources of the Empire." And which, in fact, direct all the political destinies and support all the militarism, to protect whose wealth is its prime cause of activity.

of fraternity. Men who are doing work for the sake of the work and not for the irrelevant prize of making more money out of it than their partners, who are doing work they know to be useful to others and feel to be a pleasure to themselves, who are working towards the same social results through an infinite variety of materials and by the exercise of an infinitely varied individual skill and choice, who are, in short, doing artistic work—these men have a bond in common compared with which all other kinds of association are brittle. Commerce, in fact, makes men enemies and all alike; art makes men different but friends.

**I**N this work he claimed for mankind that right to the absolute moral and intellectual liberty of which he no longer believed it worthy.

*Joseph Conrad*

**T**HE accord of one thing with another is beautiful.

*Dürer*

**A**ND the men of labour spent their strength in daily struggling for breath to maintain the vital strength they laboured with; so living in a daily circulation of sorrow, living but to work, and working but to live, as if daily bread were the only end of a wearisome life, and a wearisome life the only occasion of daily bread.

*Daniel Defoe*

**S**IR, I believe that art has such sympathy with cheerful freedom, open-heartedness and reality, so much she sickens under selfishness and luxury, that she will not live thus isolated and exclusive. I will go further than this and say that I do not wish her to live.

*William Morris*

**A**RT is the most sublime mission, since it is the expression of thought seeking to understand the world and to make it understood.

*Rodin*

**B**ENEATH the economic chaos which exists on the surface, there may be a network of human affinities which provides the ground of a stable, peaceable and enduring social order.

*L. P. Jacks*

**T**HERE is nothing in this world so silly as quarrelling.

*"Q"*

**O** THOU Who art infinitely delightful to the sons of men, make me and the sons of men infinitely delightful unto Thee. Replenish our actions with amiableness and beauty; that as Thou in all Thy works art pleasing to us, we in all our works may be so to Thee.

*Thomas Traherne*

**W**HAT thunders shall those men arraign  
Who cannot count those they have slain,  
Who bath not in a shallow flood,  
But in a deep wide sea of blood?  
A sea, whose loud waves cannot sleep,  
But deep still calleth upon deep:  
Whose urgent sound like unto that  
Of many waters, beateth at  
The everlasting doors above,  
Where souls behind the altar move,  
And with one strong, incessant cry  
Inquire *How long?* of the most High.

*Henry Vaughan*

**O** ROSE, thou art sick!  
The invisible worm  
That flies in the night,  
In the howling storm,  
Has found out thy bed  
Of crimson joy,  
And his dark, secret love  
Doth thy life destroy.

*Blake*

**W**HEN gold and gems adorn the plough,  
To peaceful arts shall envy bow.

*Ibid*

## COMMUNAL ART—III. GOOD WORK AND A COMMON UNDERSTANDING

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**C**ONVICTION, then, intelligent work for all, a communal art, a common speech and the law of the process are all means to expressing the true life of men. There is only one purpose in art, writes Charles Marriott, "to discover the Creator in the creature by revealing its true Form." The art of man is the expression of the human material, the perception and revelation of the god in him. With profound insight did Christ call himself the Son of Man.

There remains the problem of relating these single elements to one another by a formula that will cover them all; of seeing whether that formula includes both art and humanity; whether the recovery of a common understanding between the arts and men is not the best means of finding the formula for a new society, and lastly, whether by good work and a common understanding art does not fulfil humanity and humanity art.

The remarks made about Rodin's statues soaring out of the block touch this problem. The stone or marble, touched by the wand of the imaginative

spirit which understands its substance, magically gives forth its characteristic Form. As a mountain rises from the earth, as a true community from the human spirit, so expression out of material. When F. W. Robertson says in one of his Sermons:—“What we want is more life and fuller. To escape from the monotony of mere routine and habits, to feel that we are alive, with more of surprise and wakefulness in our existence. To have less of the gelid, torpid, tortoise-like existence. To feel the years before us”—he is calling for the divine and human expression out of the divine and human material.

Indeed, in that fine gesture, one gets perhaps nearer to understanding not only the identity of substance and Form, but of God with Form. For this “surprise and wakefulness” mean the intensification of life to such an extent that life’s destruction by death both seems and is a violation of the eternal law of life. When our life upon earth is engaged in the loving process of identifying substance with Form, death itself is but a passport of adventure into the undiscovered land. Death disintegrates life; the idea of death unites it. A score of birds in the hand are not, after all, worth one in the bush.

We should be trying, then, to find the right kind of *formula* of evocation, to decipher the magic words. It is very difficult, or life would not be worth living. But Nature has found it. “Although human

subtlety makes a variety of inventions answering by different means to the same end, it will never devise an invention more beautiful, more simple or more direct than does Nature, because in her inventions nothing is lacking and nothing superfluous." The smallest blade of grass in the meadows has uttered the formula and achieved the identity. In the universal language of praise and love, its little syllable is uttered. It has expressed the material, found the line of least resistance, and been true to the nature of things.\* It is not pretending to be a buttercup or a beetle. It is asserting the triumph of individuality and is a lesson on the surrender of man's soul to the cult of mechanism, not to be forgotten.

Now, a reconciliation of people and things will give us back our self-knowledge and set us again to the glad work of translating them both into the appropriate truth of their being. Here is where the combination of the two comes in. In the business of translation, the one is a kind of dictionary to the other. On the face of it, parallel lines do not meet, and the process of art cannot, therefore, blend with the process of humanity. But the substance of humanity cannot be translated into its expression, *except by the process of art*. I mean that a person who has, perhaps, never so much as heard of the word "art" will yet, if he develop a full consciousness, be acting artistically. The formula of union between substance and Form has been uttered. But when

\* Had it failed, it would, as Darwin has shown, have perished.

the process of humanity corresponds so perfectly to the process of art, it is self-evident that they cannot keep apart, except at the risk of disturbing the process. A healthy people will naturally turn to things, because, through them, they will the more perfectly know that they are men. It is, indeed, unthinkable that a genuine community could do without art. It would be essentially a work of art without knowing it—without making the works of art. The very fact that the community took pleasure in what it was doing is practically a guarantee of art. If it did not take that pleasure, it would in all probability be doing things that were weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable. "I call useful all that gives us happiness"—it sounds like Morris, but it happens to be Rodin. We cannot escape the conclusion that without this incomparable blessing mankind is a cipher. Do not the people, then, need the artist, whose presence and aid will discover to them the means of creating their lives as works of art? While for him—to work sincerely and conscientiously at art itself is a means to making an art of life.

Therefore, the most perfect art is ultimately co-operative, rising out of the common understanding, no longer like a single tree or flower, but like a landscape. In the transitional period, however, the artist has to feel his way down to that common understanding which is the material of a common language, which again is the substance of brotherhood. There is no question about its existing, be-

cause the consciousness of life is a common one. Emotions are the same in all nations. The formulas vary, that is all. The materials are there, waiting to be called to expression and the imprisoning surfaces to be cleared away. Somehow the artist has to get his meaning through, to find the formula, to utter the incantation, to release the figure from the block, the heart of man from its mechanical encasement. That is what Charles Marriott means when he says: "Art is mainly a matter of finding the right formula."\*

Most people feel but cannot see, wonder but cannot understand, and the man who sees and understands through feeling is the need of our generation. Not the "I believe, therefore I feel" of the creeds, but "I feel, therefore I believe" should be his "Pilgrim's Scrip." As the interpreter into terms of the divine of such human and natural elements as still linger in our distraught being, he has, through human feeling and desire, to find a common basis of understanding, and to bring home his message to all his kind.

Nor is it really a paradox that the very individuality of art is a means to this social end. We are obviously not social beings to-day; on the contrary, we are uncommonly like herrings in a barrel, both less social and less individual in that situation than if we were swimming free, under Nature's guid-

\* All this by no means implies, a grey fluid cosmopolitan culture: but rather an intensely individual, though not exclusive, *native* art.

ance only. Hardly ever, in all history, has the suppression of the individual coincided so significantly with the self-assertion of an anarchic society. Human choice languishes and human compliance is organised under all the different forms of lifeless mechanism. It was well said that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. All this mechanism of power and wealth is only active at the expense of and through the negation of the individual human spirit, by means of a kind of treason to the human materials. If, therefore, art can appeal to the heart of the individual, it is really on its way to the common language of the heart. By seeking a true expression of the individual heart the artist inevitably, in serving his art, serves all humanity.

It follows that that art should be traditional. Sainte-Beuve (to return to literature) wrote of Molière:—"Molière, le plus créateur et le plus inventif des génies est celui peut-être qui a le plus imité et de partout." We should translate "imité"—absorbed. True literature, that is to say, is never parthenogenic, and even Bunyan had the Bible as a model. Especially will models be indispensable to an art and letters "turning over a new leaf." That the leaf is part of the book is a commonplace of literary history. "The bees do heere and there suck this and cull that flower," wrote Montaigne, "but afterwards they produce the honey, which is peculiarly their own, then is it no more Thyme or Marjoram."

I need not labour this essential point, because it is implied in nearly every argument already used. Tradition is not (as the literary *arriviste* declares) an iron chain tethering the free spirit of art to the past. The artist who obeys a traditional impulse may be the reverse of academic. The proof of artistic tradition's vitality lies in its survival. The kings, the statesmen, the soldiers of the ages disappear, but the art of the ages remains.

But I refer to tradition here because it is one of the artist's allies in the attempt to work his way through to the common understanding, to recover a common language and so to become the voice of his kind. The idea of man is clearly apprehended by all nations and all periods, however different their manners and languages. Tradition, speaking for the latter, affirms that idea; internationalism speaking for the former, acknowledges it. Modern art expresses that idea; the man who scratched a reindeer on a mammoth-bone with a flint expressed it; the object of art, politics and religion is to express it. Man, God and Nature, three in one and one in three—their idea is the riddle and answer of the universe, so far at any rate as the furthest imagination can apprehend it. Deprived of the idea of them, the world is inconceivable chaos, a black formless hole with neither sides nor bottom. The religious artist, therefore, intent upon expressing the idea of man, at once floats out into the current of tradition. His language, if true to the

material, formulates itself traditionally. He is expressing an idea, although, perhaps, unconsciously, that the languages of the world have shaped themselves in expressing. The vast ocean of eternal thought flows through him, exhilarating him with its brine, governing him by its solemn rhythm, and his originality consists in adapting it to the measure of his own artistic need and choice. If feeling himself in danger of being swept away by it he take refuge in the sluggish, discoloured river of the present, the blame is his, not tradition's. Art is "instinct working upon an unbroken chain of tradition,"\* and the major difficulty of our period is to re-awaken the perception of beauty in people who have no longer the natural eye of tradition to perceive it with. Folk-art is dead now, killed, with the tradition of it, by Commerce. It was once alive.

I conclude, then, that to restore pleasure and intelligence to the common round, the daily task, and to leave the human being alone to express his life through the pipes of his normal work would be the opening of a transformation-scene upon the human theatre, the like of which has never been recorded in history.

Work and leisure are the natural day and night of man's existence. But it is usual to throw the weight

\* It is a wonderful fact that young birds, quite unacquainted with the route, are often the first to migrate. In spite of the vast distances they traverse, they all fly (except for stragglers) in the line of the older birds. Their guide, therefore, is inherited memory or unconscious tradition.

of argument upon the leisure rather than the work of the workers—leisure for the cultivation of neglected faculties, and as a check upon the specialisation of industry, leisure for health, for art, etc. But leisure and work are too closely related to present two separate problems. Mean work means thriftless leisure, profitable idleness means fruitful work. “What other blessings are there in life,” wrote Morris, “save these two, fearless rest and hopeful work? . . . To have space and freedom to gain such rest and such work is the end of politics; to learn how best to gain it is the end of education; to learn its inmost meaning is the end of religion.” A system under which men and women toil for long hours at high speed under arbitrary conditions, without initiative or interest, makes leisure as dull as work and work as impotent as leisure.

Their recreations will be as savage as their work is brutalising. Thus a shorter work-day is a mere preliminary blank leaf to the book of spiritual economy. Settle how to make work useful and creative and the use of leisure will settle itself. That is the object of a co-operative art. Until people see that art *is* “the serious business of life,” we shall get nowhere. How are we to get leisure? What are we to do with our work? It is not the joy of work (as the parsons say) that we want, but the work of joy.

To make a thing for use inevitably implies interest and pleasure, and they again indispensably are

a prelude to art.\* For instance, the real incentive to getting in the hay is that the hay has to be got in. It is not actually good sport, but uncommonly fatiguing work; yet work worth doing and so of interest. But to make hay because Master Giles, the farmer, will, at the end of the day, pay you an inadequate wage for it, is neither interesting nor pleasurable. Nor would it be, were the wage adequate, or even munificent; to work for profit instead of for use is to lose the spiritual value of individual choice, skill, pride and stimulus, as well as the support of the communal effort. Even if the communal effort spent itself merely in satisfying the bare human necessities and was untouched by the creative spirit, nine-tenths of modern civilisation would fall away. The difficult thing to decide would be not what would disappear, but what would remain. The proud labours of a century of commerce result in supplying a few people with a vast number of things which no rational human being can need and denying to most people those few essentials by which life is rendered not, indeed, joyful and experimental, but barely tolerable. Side by side with a commonwealth that produces for its members "to each according to his need," that loves the process for its own sake and glorifies the product as a fulfilment of the will of God in the creation

\* In Arts and Crafts Exhibitions, it is interesting to note that things made for ornament are very frequently vile; for use generally good.

of beauty—how paltry, transient and gloomy appears European civilisation.\*

Mankind (it may be to-night, to-morrow, or the day after, when our children's grandchildren possess the earth) will at last withdraw his spell-bound eyes from his graven images, will at last recoil in horror and ridicule from the sudden consciousness of what he has done and look from within upon the fairness of the world and with Art and Nature for his builders, lay the first stones of Thelema. The men of State, War and Money, say the one; the artist, the thinker, the lover, all the ambassadors of humanity, whoever they be, say the other. Which shall it be?

“O cease! must hate and death return?  
 Cease! must men kill and die?  
 Cease! drain not to its dregs the urn  
 Of bitter prophecy;  
 The world is weary of the past—  
 O might it die or rest at last!”

\* It may be objected that I ignore the fact that there will always be tedious and distasteful jobs in the world. I would remind such objectors that our commercial system holds and enforces the theory that work is trifling unless it be tedious and distasteful. If a madhouse community and a prostituted science can arrange to make its members and victims bear the intolerable existence which their follies have brought upon them, surely a sensible community is not going to run on the rocks by making necessarily tedious work dishonourable. The common necessities of men ought to be able to settle the residue of the problem left unsolved by machinery. Remember the gorgeous dustman in “News from Nowhere.”

THE END

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